

Sight and Sound

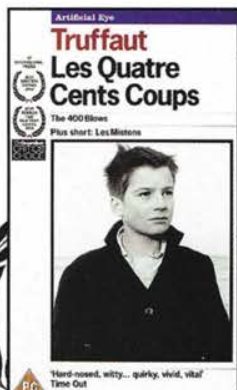


Robert Altman's
'Pret-a-Porter': the opening
Hitchcock's 'Psycho':
screaming in the dark
Michael Powell's 'Peeping Tom':
murder as fine art
'The Nightmare Before Christmas':
a gothic movie
'Strawberry and Chocolate'
and Cuban machismo



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Natural Born Killers

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Sight and Sound
(Incorporating Monthly
Film Bulletin)
Volume 4 Issue 12 (NS)
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London W1P 1PL
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Facsimile 071 436 2327

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US distribution
2nd class postage paid at Rahway,
NJ, and at additional mailing
offices. Postmaster: send address
corrections to Sight and Sound,
c/o Mercury Airfreight
International Ltd Inc., 2323
Randolph Avenue,
Avenel, NJ 07001
Subscription price is \$63.00
Newsstand distribution by:
Eastern News Distributors Inc.

Annual subscription rates

UK £29.50
Europe £36.00
US/Canada airspeed £36.00
Overseas surface mail £36.00
Overseas airmail £61.00
Special rates apply to BFI
members

For subscription queries contact:
Subscription Department,
Sight and Sound
Tower House, Sovereign Park
Market Harborough
Leicestershire LE16 9EF
Telephone 0858 468888
Facsimile 0858 434958
Binders available from Sight and
Sound 071 636 3289. UK £7.00,
overseas surface mail £9.00

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Sight and Sound magazine



SIGHT AND SOUND MAGAZINE
Published monthly by the
British Film Institute
ISSN 0037-4806

Sight and Sound

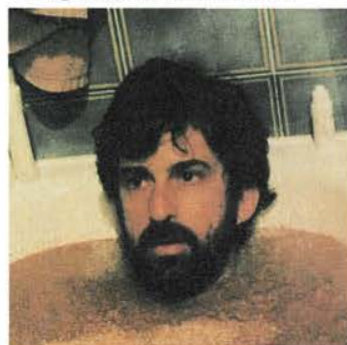
December 1994



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'The Nightmare Before Christmas': 26



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Spain

From the director of *Jamon Jamon*
Bigas Luna's
Golden Balls

Starring
Javier Bardem
Maria de Medeiros
Maribel Verdu

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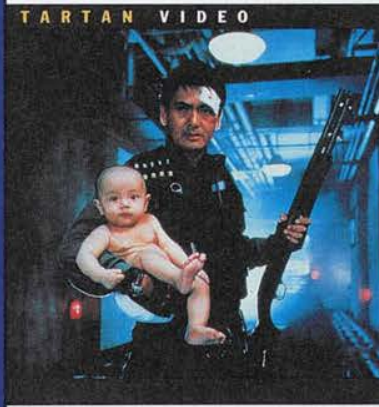
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On the run

Contributors to this issue

Janet Abrams, formerly photography critic of the *Independent*, is now based in New York and writes for numerous magazines including *ID*

Michael Eaton has written the forthcoming four-part BBC series, *Signs and Wonders*

Leslie Felperin has written widely on animation

Nick Kimberley writes on music for the *Independent* and *The Wire*

Simon Louvish is a novelist and critic. His study of *It's a Gift* is in the BFI Film Classics series

Ron Peck directed *Nighthawks* and is making a television drama set in the boxing world

Gavin Smith has conducted numerous interviews for *Sight and Sound*; his conversation with Paul Schrader about Jean Renoir will appear in the next issue

Paul Julian Smith is the author of the recently published *Desire Unlimited: the Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar*

Amy Taubin is working on a study of *Taxi Driver*

Teresa Toledo works at the Filmteca, Madrid

Linda Williams is Professor at the University of California, Irving and the author of *Hardcore*

Peter Wollen is a critic, curator and film-maker whose most recent book is *Raiding the IceBox*, a collection of his essays

When Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers* appeared in Warner Bros' schedule as an 18 November release with barely six weeks to go, the lack of a fanfare was deafening. Any film by a major Hollywood director such as Stone is usually accompanied by a slow crescendo of media coverage lasting four or five months. Yet here was a potential UK hit, very favourably reviewed in the US, with the added hip imprimatur of Quentin Tarantino attached to its script (despite his disowning it), slotted into the schedule with apparent carelessness just four weeks after Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*. Clearly a peculiar marketing strategy was being employed; how would it work?

It is instructive to review how events then unfolded. The *Sunday Times* of 23 October gave the first clue. "Kiss and kill film runs foul of censors" ran the headline of a report stating that the British Board of Film Classification was delaying the granting of a certificate, "after police abroad had linked [the film] to at least 10 killings." An anonymous BBFC member was quoted as saying: "It is a truly revolting film. I would happily cut bits of it, but it is like a stick of rock – the violence is all the way through." The article assumed that it was unusual for a film to lack a certificate at this point, though in fact films are often certificated as late as ten days before their release. It was also reported that Warner Bros had postponed the film's release until later in the year.

Two days later in the *Guardian*, Warner Bros was said to be sticking to the original release date and to be confident of getting a certificate. Nevertheless, the idea that there was BBFC resistance to the film was confirmed. Certainly the board had been concerned enough in August to invite Stone to explain himself. As the *Daily Telegraph* was later to report, Stone had come to Britain and persuaded BBFC director James Ferman that *Natural Born Killers* was "an important film about an important subject – how the US media turns serial killers into celebrities." That some of Ferman's colleagues were apparently unconvinced is nothing unusual. The lengthy certification process means that certain films can remain under discussion for some time.

The first actual attack on the film was in the *Daily Mail* of 26 October. Under the headline "It's the splatter that matters in Stone's evil 'satire'", the *Mail* described the movie's effect on two Californian teenagers, one of whom suggests that if he had a gun he'd "splatter everybody in the mall". By this point, the "nearly 100" murders the *Sunday Times* claimed were depicted in the film had come down to the *Mail*'s assessment of 52, but in all other respects the fuss had escalated. The *Daily Mail* described

Stone as "a hypocrite operating in a moral vacuum" and his film as "one of the most horrific explosions of blood and guts in cinema history". But behind the lurid language there was no trace of any new development.

Having initially published the most cool-headed report, the *Guardian* subsequently chose to feature one of the real-life crimes supposedly committed in imitation of Stone's film on the cover of its tabloid section of 27 October with the heading "Natural Born Killer". In France, an "angelic" hard-working student, Florence Rey, and her boyfriend Audry Maupin had entered a police car pound and disarmed two guards at gunpoint. The subsequent pursuit and battle led to the deaths of Maupin, a taxi driver and three officers. A leaflet advertising Stone's film was found in the couple's apartment. It is a sensational story, and one that the *Guardian* didn't mind donating to the pro-censorship lobby.

Ireland's official censor recommended that the film be banned. In the *Daily Telegraph* of 28 October, Warner Bros confirmed that it was postponing the film's release until next year and blamed the classification delay. Thanks either to luck or shrewd judgment, the film now had all the publicity it could wish for. It had benefited from the issues raised by *Pulp Fiction* without having to compete against it. Of course, there was still the risk that the film would be banned, rather than delayed.

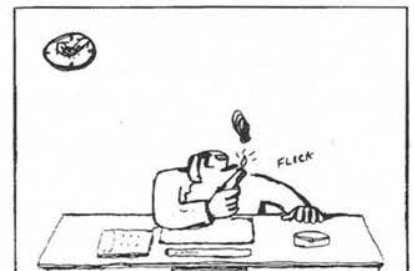
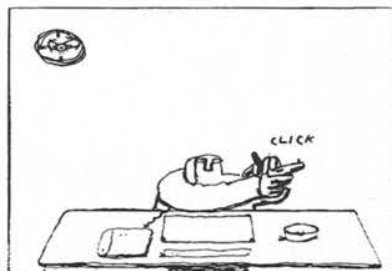
But as James Ferman has reiterated several times, very few films are refused a certificate outright. Indeed, he told the *Telegraph*: "I'm not sure what all the fuss is about. The film has received unanimous praise in the United States and every other board in Europe has passed it." If, as we hope and expect, the film is eventually passed, how can we understand the furore of the last week?

Ferman's comment in the *Guardian* of 25 October – "obviously we're discussing it seriously because we're in a very cautious mood this year" – gives a clue. Ferman is, of course, referring to the moral panic caused by the Jamie Bulger killing and the resulting amendments of clauses relating to video classification in the Criminal Justice Bill. With the bill just through Parliament, there is a very real possibility that those who wish to restrict public freedom will feed on anxiety about children and 'video violence'. This magazine once advised its readers not to panic about the Criminal Justice amendment. But what is now under attack is our right as adults to choose what we wish to see.

In the meantime, the BBFC's 'responsible attitude' has generated more free publicity for Warner Bros than it could ever have imagined. James Ferman may be the best advertising agency Warners never employed.

JERRY ON LINE #1

Peter Lydon – James Sillavan ©



'Jerry, wasn't it me that said, a long way back, "When the action drags, bring on a man with a gun?" Nowadays if a character enters unarmed I'm on the edge of my seat with excitement! Maybe blood & brains won't stain the paintwork this time! Maybe the characters become pals!'

The business

● A long time ago, when Stanley Kubrick's ban on the showing of *A Clockwork Orange* in the UK was less widely publicised, I tried – as part of a film course – to rent a 16 mm copy of the film, which featured fairly prominently in (what was then) the Columbia-Warner-EMI 16 mm catalogue. No, said the booking lady; rental of the film was restricted. "To whom?" I asked. "Prisons, hospitals and borstals," she replied.

I spent some time trying to figure out the link and came to the conclusion that it was containment: for different reasons, none of the film's permitted audiences would be out on the street – or the pedestrian underpass – after the screening. Viewers in prisons, hospitals and borstals were contained and, therefore, controlled.

I offer this as a lateral-thinking reflection on October's *Natural Born Killers* fuss, since the ability to control audiences appears to be the central concept at work here. The BBFC's apparent objection to *NBK* is now, as it was with *The Wild One* or *The Driller Killer*, that the film would exercise undue influence over those members of the audience too young, too stupid or too socially deprived to resist it. They might well react in an out-of-control way.

The application of more stringent rules to video releases – as with, for example, *Reservoir Dogs* – reinforces the view: since the censor cannot ultimately control what parents let their children watch, better not take the chance of making the film available to them. Of course, the Criminal Justice Bill – which looks like being the Major government's most unpleasant legacy – also has something to do with it.

I suspect, however, that the *NBK* row will sort itself out fairly quickly, since the BBFC is dealing not with some small-scale distributor of specialist fare, but with Warner Bros, which has made a lot of money out of the film in the US (unusual for an Oliver Stone movie) and plans to do so here as well. What interests me is the kid-gloves treatment the film is being given: James Ferman has said he wants every member of the BBFC to see it before a decision is arrived at and appears – within the increasingly paranoid limits he has set himself – to be leaning over backwards in his attempts to be fair.

That was not the case with Ray Brady's *Boy Meets Girl*, a kind of British *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* in which a female serial killer humiliates, tortures and finally kills her male victim in stomach-churning fashion. There were no special offers of a full-board screening here: simply a comment from Ferman to Brady that he didn't understand why anyone



Weird romance: Ray Brady's 'Boy Meets Girl', a challenge to hardcore violence addicts

would want to make the film in the first place.

As it happens, Brady is fairly vociferous on this point, arguing that *Boy Meets Girl* – made for around £12,000, with post-production costs and a 35 mm transfer bringing the total nearer £50,000 – is about confronting viewers with their own salacious attitude to screen violence, an issue which *NBK* fudges by making the ratings-driven media the scapegoat. Refused a certificate, *Boy Meets Girl* has so far been screened only at the NFT and on the UK festival circuit. Perhaps more to the point, it cannot be released on video either, robbing Brady of both the possibility of reaching the hardcore violence addicts he professes to target and of any chance of getting his money back.

This is unlikely to be a major problem for Warner Bros. For Brady, it most definitely is.

Moving from a censorship soapbox to eating humble pie is a manoeuvre Mr Busy does not often have to make. But here goes.

Within days of my suggestion (S&S November) that some Italian megaplan lay behind the Scott brothers' purchase of Shepperton Studios, Rizzoli/Corriere della Sera – the company which had part-funded the Scotts' abortive production deal with Fox – announced that it was pulling out of as many of its international audiovisual ventures as it decently could.

The decision was taken by the main board of the publishing giant with a swiftness that will surprise anyone who has ever had dealings with a major Italian company. It prompted the resignation of RCS Film & TV managing director Paolo Glisenti, who had been behind the Scott deal (the cancellation of which is expected to cost RCS some \$10 million). Glisenti had also committed RCS to a 5 per cent stake in UK broadcaster Carlton Communications (since absorbed by Carlton itself), and to a joint deal with US production

company Trilogy ('Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves', 'Backdraft', 'Blown Away') and Britain's Majestic Films & Television ('Dances with Wolves', 'Rapa Nui'). The last deal is still in place, probably because it will supply a reliable flow of product to RCS' planned Italian pay-TV channel – which may, of course, also go, presumably taking the Majestic deal with it.

The RCS move marks the second time in just over 12 months that a big Italian company has got burned in Hollywood and pulled out: the last time was the joint Berlusconi/Cecchi Gori venture Pentamerica, which shut down in 1993. And there are signs that the large amounts of money invested in US production by two other European media giants – French pay-TV company Canal +, via its own production operation Le Studio Canal + (US) and its links with Carolco; and Germany's Connexion Film, backed by publisher Scriba & Deyhle, which funds Capella International – are not going to yield quite the returns once hoped for. Neither deal has yet produced a hit, and the roster of unreleased films almost outweighs those that have opened.

Britain's Rank Film Distributors, meanwhile, has put up 50 per cent of the costs for 'Getting Away with Murder', 'Circle of Friends' and 'Heaven's Prisoners', a trio of medium-budget movies produced by Savoy Pictures, the well-funded mini-major headed by Frank Price, whose Hollywood studio career was brought to a somewhat inglorious end by 'Howard the Duck'. But that deal is basically a pre-buy in return for international rights – a less hazardous form of activity at which Rank has proved quite successful in the past, thanks to such judicious (if varied) investments as 'Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe', 'The Fabulous Baker Boys' and 'Weekend at Bernie's'.

As usual, caution rather than creative energy has paid off in the movie business. ● Vittorio Cecchi Gori – whose father and Penta partner, Mario, died last year – has gone back to doing what he does best: backing Italian movies. Which is just as well for Michelangelo

Antonioni and Wim Wenders, who saw their co-directed project *Lies* (aka *Meditations*) stumble and almost fall in late September when one of Italy's few remaining state film bodies, Istituto Luce, abruptly withdrew its 25 per cent stake in the \$8 million film.

Luce pulled out on 21 September, two weeks before the film's original start date, prompting the resignation of chief executive Felice Laudadio, appointed earlier this year. Laudadio – one-time director of Rimini's EuropaCinema festival – accused his board of extreme bad faith.

Two weeks later, however, Cecchi Gori joined forces with Wenders' Road Movies and French producers Stéphane Tchallagadeff and Philippe Carcassonne to put the film back on track. Shooting was (at press time) due to start on 3 November in Portofino, with a cast that now includes John Malkovich, Jeremy Irons, Marcello Mastroianni and Fanny Ardant.

Published in 1928 and immediately banned because of its subject matter (a lesbian love story), Radclyffe Hall's classic novel 'The Well of Loneliness' is finally to be filmed, with Emma Thompson expected to star.

Producers are Paris-based Pandora and UK company Kudos Productions. Richard Friedenberg ('A River Runs Through It') will write the screenplay, but no director has yet been named. Shooting is expected to start in mid-1995.

● Forget Westerns and violent crime thrillers: 1995 should be the year of the pirate movie, which has not really blossomed on the big screen (or, for that matter, anywhere) since the 50s. Tony Scott is busily at work on *Crimson Tide*, with Gene Hackman and Denzel Washington, while Geena Davis plays a female buccaneer in *Cutthroat Island*, produced and directed by hubby Renny Harlin.

Neither has enjoyed exactly plain sailing. Dustin Hoffman was originally

set to star in *Crimson Tide*, while Michael Douglas jumped ship on *Cutthroat Island* in mid-summer, prompting one of the most public casting crises in recent times. Virtually every available leading man in Hollywood was discussed as a replacement, until the rather lame announcement, at the end of August, that Matthew Modine would play opposite Davis. Since Modine is scarcely in the same category as Douglas, several of the film's pre-sales to foreign distributors – made on the basis of Douglas as co-star – appeared to be in jeopardy.

The whole business did, however, prompt *Variety* to investigate Carolco boss and *Cutthroat Island* executive producer Mario Kassar's deal on the film. This is what it came up with: a \$1 million producer's fee (in addition, that is, to Kassar's \$2,250,000 annual salary, \$7,500 monthly expense allowance and \$25 million life

insurance policy), plus 1 per cent of every gross rental dollar (that is, before the deduction of distribution and other costs) and 10 per cent of all merchandising revenue.

It's a thought that might brighten up your winter reading. It certainly makes Mario feel better, especially with his company having been in almost permanent financial crisis for the past year.

Pity the poor movie star suddenly subjected to the rigours of television production. Geneviève Bujold, cast – after many weeks of negotiation – as the new captain of the ship in Paramount's television series 'Star Trek: Voyager', has left after only a few days' shooting.

Struggling to make up time and meet a January 1995 launch, the production was shooting 16- to 18-hour days. "After several days of production," said a notably brief Paramount statement, "she realised that the rigours of episodic television were too demanding."

● In 1992, Venice Film Festival chief Gillo Pontecorvo (whose career as director included such classics as *The Battle of Algiers* and *Quemada!*) made a trip to Hollywood in search of major US films for his programme – something every festival director has to do. The most common reaction Pontecorvo received, however, was not, "We don't have anything for you", but, "Good Lord! Is Venice still going?"

It was an understandable, if somewhat out-dated response: the Venice Festival shut down for most of the 70s, after a round of in-fighting even more vicious than usual. But it has been very much back in business since 1980, and has now become almost as important as Cannes in the Hollywood diary. Those on hand this year included Jack Nicholson, Tom Hanks, Michael Douglas, Oliver Stone and most of the top Paramount brass.

This has created a problem for the almost simultaneous Festival du

Cinéma Américain in Deauville, whose basic function is to promote the autumn's big American releases in France. At the time of Pontecorvo's first fruitless trip to Hollywood, all the US stars used to go to Deauville. Now they go to Venice.

Nicholson cancelled a planned Deauville trip, as did Gregory Peck, Vanessa Redgrave, Alec Baldwin, Susan Sarandon and Jeff Bridges. Danny De Vito, James Woods and Nicolas Cage showed up. Without star-power, Deauville could end up being just another of the 200-odd full-scale film festivals on the annual calendar, which would be a major blow for its organisers, André Halimi and Lionel Chouchan, who last year saw the ski resort of Avoriaz cancel their annual *film fantastique* festival.

This time last year, I bet you'd never heard of Jim Carrey. Now, after 'Ace Ventura: Pet Detective' and 'The Mask' (below), it's hard to escape him. Soon, he'll be back as The Riddler in 'Batman Forever'. And in a small-scale comedy called 'Dumb and Dumber'.

Carrey was signed for 'Dumb and Dumber' before 'Ace Ventura' opened but after 'The Mask' was completed. Advance word on the former was strong, and New Line was happy with what it had seen of 'The Mask', which still had all the process work to do on it. Even so, New Line reportedly did not think Carrey was worth more than \$750,000 for 'Dumb and Dumber'. Carrey's agent reckoned he was worth \$1 million.

Then 'Ace Ventura' opened, and New Line apparently decided \$1 million was cool. But by now, Carrey's people were asking for \$2 million. A week later, with 'Ace Ventura' proving the sleeper of the year, New Line seemed ready to go \$2 million. But Carrey and Co now wanted \$3 million – reportedly.

By the end of the process, by which time 'Ace Ventura' had grossed a high eight-figure sum, Brad Krevoy, a former Roger Corman aide who has been successfully repeating the master's lessons for the past three or four years with his low-budget, high-volume Motion Picture Corporation of America, did some sums and reckoned he could pay what Carrey was now asking and still sell the film on to a major studio at a profit. The studio that finally accepted the package was (you've got it) New Line. And the final Carrey-on price? \$7 million.

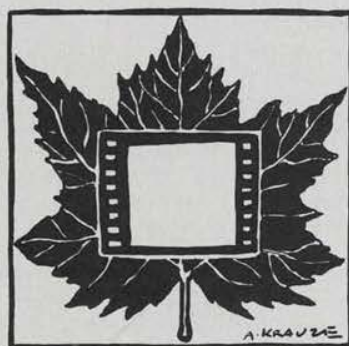
VANCOUVER NOTES

Northern exposure

Located in a cosmopolitan, Pacific rim, Canadian city, the Vancouver Film Festival this year presented 254 films in 17 days. The festival, which is well supported by both government and corporate money, is geared towards the local population, which filled the theatres not only for over-hyped festival circuit hits from Kieślowski's *Three Colours: Red* to Peter Jackson's *Heavenly Creatures*, but also for an eclectic and infinitely more rewarding array of features by fledgling directors. Attendance reached an all-time high of nearly 112,000. Although Vancouver has a small film and TV trade forum (three days of panel discussions), the festival has no market, which means that there's almost no film-industry presence. Most of the film-makers I spoke to said that they were happy to be relieved of the responsibility to sell, sell, sell.

In recent years, Vancouver has had an enormous influx of Asian money (largely from Hong Kong), throwing the city into something of an identity crisis. The festival, appropriately, is distinguished by its extensive selection of both Canadian and East Asian films. The East Asian 'Dragons and Tigers' section gave a jury prize for the most innovative first or second feature. The winner, *This Window Is Yours* by Japanese director Tomoyuki Furumaya, is about a summer romance between two rural teenagers, described by San Francisco critic Chuck Stephens as "irresistibly charming".

Among other Asian films by young directors, I particularly liked the



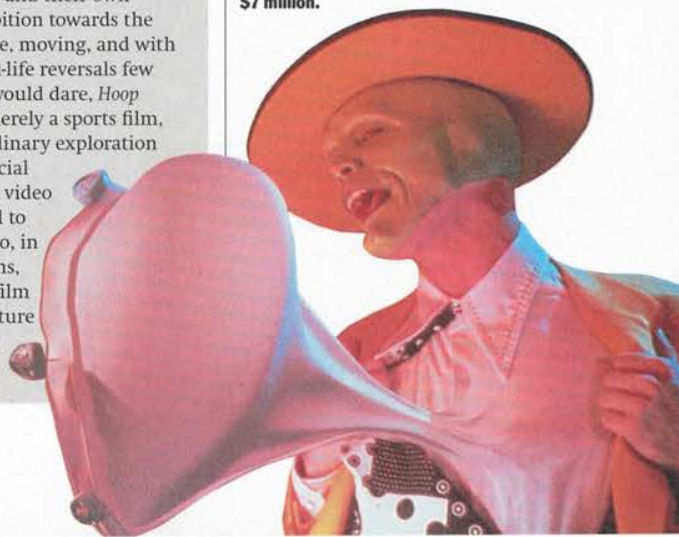
South Korean *La Vie en rose* by Kim Hong-June and the Japanese *Osaka Story – A Documentary* by Toichi Nakata. Set in the period of political unrest preceding the 1988 Olympics, *La Vie en rose* focuses on a female comic-book store owner and her customers (runaway kids, political fugitives, migrant workers, nightshift waitresses) for whom the store is their only home. Kim Hong-June, who has a degree in anthropology, turns an ethnographer's eye on the urban underbelly. If the film doesn't quite cohere, it's because the director attempted to bridge two audiences by dragging genre action clichés and sexual stereotypes into what is essentially an art film. Still, it's a glimpse of Korea like no other.

The fragile though startlingly direct *Osaka Story* deals with not unrelated crises in the lives of the film-maker and his parents. Nakata says he wanted to have a record of his ageing parents and to make the kind of intimate portrait of Japanese family life that never appears on screen in the west – or in Japan, for that matter.

He also wanted to explore several questions: could he come out as a gay man to his family? Should he return to Osaka and take up the family business or pursue film-making abroad? And could the 40-year relationship between his Korean father and Japanese mother survive the fact that his father now has a 'second family' in Korea? Dense and moving, *Osaka Story* frames personal desire within cultural constraints.

Indeed, documentaries shone in Vancouver. The prescient 'Faultlines: Nonfiction Features of 1994' presented a strong selection which included two of the greatest films of this year: Godard's *JLG/JLG – Self-portrait in December*, a putative study of the film-maker which is, in fact, an elegy for the death of film itself, and Steve James, Frederick Marx and Peter Gilbert's *Hoop Dreams*, which follows two Chicago African-American teenage basketball players for five years as they are channelled by family, coaches and their own passionate ambition towards the pros. Immediate, moving, and with the kind of real-life reversals few screenwriters would dare, *Hoop Dreams* is not merely a sports film, but an extraordinary exploration of American social history. Shot in video and transferred to 35 mm, it is also, in Godardian terms, a work of post-film cinema. The future could not have a better start.

Amy Taubin



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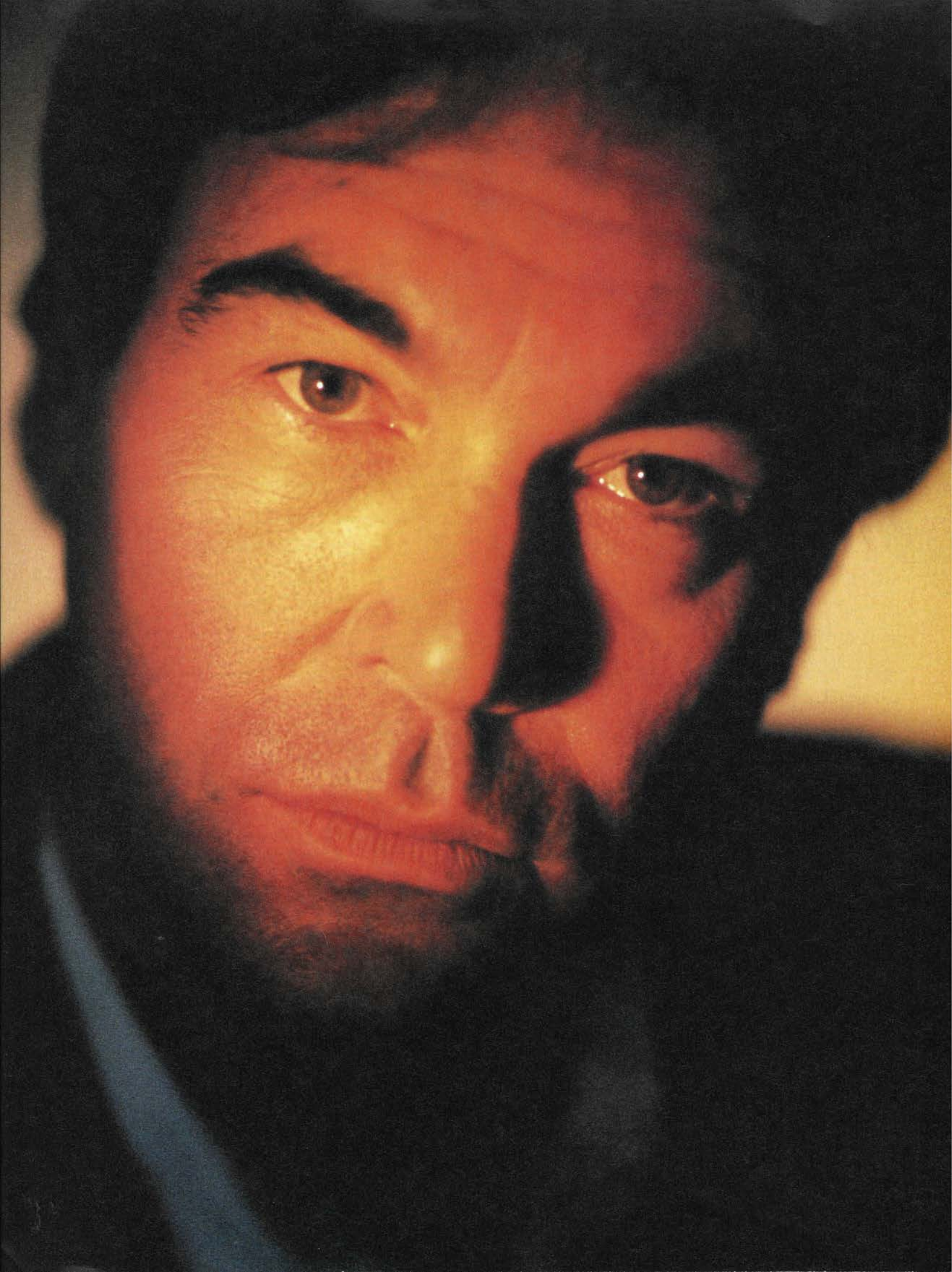
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The director on 'Natural Born Killers', the soundtrack, editing and violence. By Gavin Smith

OLIVER STONE WHY DO I HAVE TO PROVOKE?

At the climax of *Natural Born Killers*, white trash thrill-kill couple Mickey and Mallory Knox (Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis) take advantage of a prison riot to stage a live-on-TV jailbreak, using prison guards and the TV crew as human shields. The riot has been triggered by the inflammatory Nietzschean/metaphysical rhetoric Mickey used to justify himself in a ratings-grabbing TV interview with his would-be moral nemesis, star journalist Wayne Gayle (Robert Downey Jr), the self-righteous host of *American Psychos*, the *ne plus ultra* of tabloid TV. Their escape route blocked by a squad of armed guards led by the psychotic Warden McClusky (Tommy Lee Jones), Mallory demonstrates they mean business by firing a warning shot point blank through one of Gayle's hands. Cut to an outrageously unlikely reverse angle of Mickey, Mallory *et al* seen through the bullet hole in Gayle's palm.

Blink and you'll miss this throwaway gag shot – a frame of flesh within a frame of film – trimmed but not quite cut from the R-rated version of *Natural Born Killers* released this summer in the US (among the cuts: shots of prison guards being crammed into ovens, mass throat slittings, Warden McClusky's severed head on a pole and, in the film's most disturbing sequence, Mickey's motel room rape and murder of a hostage, which made crucial connections between sex and violence that were too explicit for the MPAA). This bullet-hole-through-hand moment is most representative of *Natural Born Killers'* approach to violence: cruel, mean, gratuitous even – but above all, absurd, blatantly cartoonish.

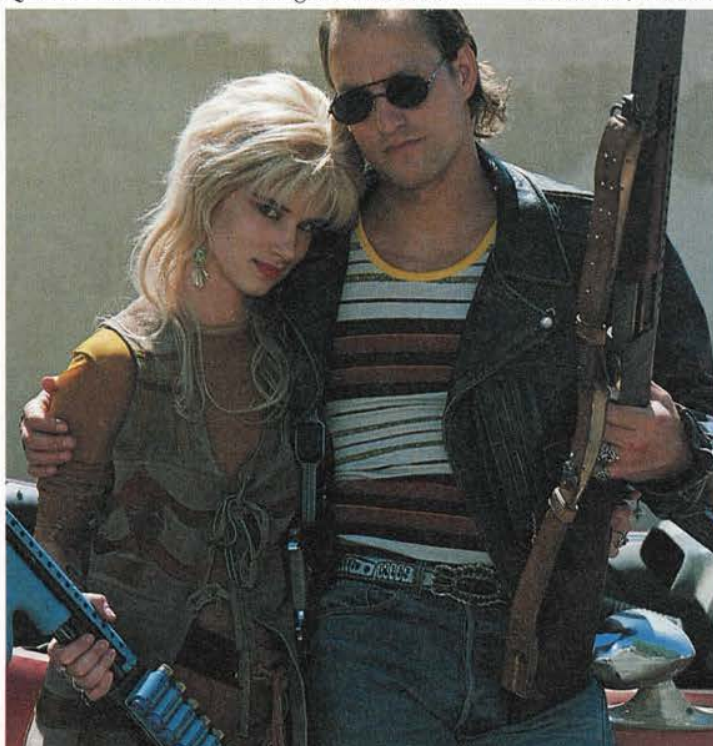
This unmistakably parodic manner is established in what must be the opening scene of the year: Mickey and Mallory dispatching an assortment of dim-witted rednecks in a roadside diner in an extended set piece complete with the mid-air over-shoulder point-of-view shots of a bullet and a buck knife specified by Quentin Tarantino in his original draft of the

screenplay. (Tarantino has opted for a minimal credit and disassociates himself from the film, though I'd say that roughly 80 per cent of his script survives intact – the main addition made by Stone and his writers is the overlaying of a moral and spiritual perspective that is the logical outgrowth of the preoccupations of *The Doors* and *Heaven & Earth*.)

The anticipated firestorm of moral outrage in the US media never quite materialised at the end of a summer made safe by *Forrest Gump's* pacification. Though critics were divided between those who praised the film's audacity and those who dismissed it as irresponsible cynicism, *Natural Born Killers* seemed perfectly timed to tap into growing public consciousness of the media's exploitative processing of crime and violence into amoral spectacle. A busy collage of visual innovation driven by a compelling industrial/alternative rock soundtrack and laced with ambiguous cheap thrills, it is unquestionably Stone's *pièce de résistance* and ranks among mainstream cinema's greatest formal experiments. Yet Stone doesn't make things easy for himself or the audience: *Natural Born Killers* is a double-edged sword, unafraid to implicate itself in the sadism of spectacle, its punishing, unrelieved harshness and in-your-face excess the only way to make its point.

Stone's film is a savage, surreal satire about violence in modern America and its representation on television and in the movies. Like all satire, it employs outrage, extremism, cruelty and indecency as rhetorical devices. That censors credit its visual simulation as having a morally corrosive power is ironic indeed, since *Natural Born Killers* arguably satirises that very notion. The words "TOO MUCH TV" are projected across Mallory's body; intermittent flashes of nightmare imagery (Mickey bathed in blood, lungeing demons) seem to mock those who would attribute sociopathology to the malign, subliminal influence of film.

Of course, Stone is almost having it both ►



Oliver and the couple: Oliver Stone, the director, opposite; the white trash 'stars' of 'Natural Born Killers', left

ways: he's attacking television and the media for its exploitation, sensationalism and hypocrisy in what is at its core an exploitation movie – or a parody of one. Then again, exploitation movies are inherently self-parodic. *Natural Born Killers* has a knack of raising these sorts of questions about cinema, setting up a dialogue between social commentary and film. This is most explicit in a motel room interlude where Mickey and Mallory are bombarded with cable TV images from *The Wild Bunch*, *Scarface* and *Midnight Express*, while the motel room window behind them becomes a screen on which documentary images of the historical traumas of the twentieth century are projected. The two separate visual realities create a dialectic in which Mickey and Mallory are both subject and end result, while Stone provocatively dangles before us the notion of film's desensitising effect, employing highlights from two of his own greatest screenwriting hits.

So *Natural Born Killers* is also an investigation into the limits of filmic representation. The viewer is plunged into a phantasmagoria of aesthetic anarchy: critical distance, identification and narrative continuity are eradicated in a gleeful frenzy of deranged visual overload. Shifting formats (from colour to black and white to video to 8 mm to 16 mm to animation) with a manic over-turning of visual consistency, the film flips in and out of different planes of reality – as if criss-crossing a half-dozen parallel universes – producing extraordinary moments of suspension and dissociation.

Indeed, the film denies the possibility of an objective, normative 'reality' as a frame of reference, insisting instead on multiple, hallucinatory subjective versions of the same approximate series of events, all of them given equal weight. Call it Schizophrenic Realism. Reclaiming in one sweep all the post-war American avant-garde experimental film techniques appropriated by MTV over the past ten years, then feeding them back as a critique of representation, Stone has made a film of defiant anti-naturalism that offsets its kamikaze sensationalism with authentic moments of twisted poetry and lyrical sensuality. There's probably not a single conventional image in the movie, a two-hour barrage of sound and image jump-cuts, canted angles, berserk handheld camera, outrageous process shots, overexposed and grainy footage, projected images, stock documentary and found footage, tacky optical zooms, multiple camera speeds, video noise and distortion, luridly stylised lighting, computer image morphing and so on.

If the very fabric of reality seems to disintegrate before our eyes, it may be because Stone conceives the ten-decade atrocity that is his twentieth century as a Vietnam without end, outcome of the ultimate conspiracy: human existence and history possessed and manipulated by invisible Forces of Evil. As his autobiographical persona said too portentously at the end of *Platoon*, the enemy is us. In a sense Stone, a film-maker who violently divides audiences with his fanatical commitment to an anti-authoritarian, proto-anarchic vision, has finally lost his grip on reality – and it's the best thing that could have happened to him.

Gavin Smith: Let's say 'Natural Born Killers' is a film about the triangular relationship between crime, media and society that adopts the form of contemporary social satire, then feeds all that through two movie genres, the road movie and the prison thriller. What relationship did you try to establish between these elements and the film's style?

Oliver Stone: I have to be upfront and say that the film changed a lot as we went along, it assumed new shapes. There are things in the movie that are still beyond my fingertips, beyond comprehension – the butterfly moment, the walk into the prison with Scagnetti and the Warden, the rabbit with bloody fangs Mickey mentions in the interview, which is the last image of the movie. It's the nature of the film and the nature of the ending.

Those are all moments I wanted to address – moments where the film seems to shift into another, almost mysterious realm.

The movie evolved through the photography and editing, all the way along the line. When I think back to its origins, in my head, I'd say they were pre-Tarantino, back to 1981, my writing *Scarface* and saying to myself, this is a movie about crime and I want to make one myself. I wrote *The Year of the Dragon* and *8 Million Ways to Die*, but I had never had the chance to direct a gangster movie. Then when I saw Quentin's script, I thought, this is the perfect chance for me.

So it's a road movie/prison movie crossed with 90s media; criminals are perceived in the movie via the media. In the old days they would have had an independent existence – in *Scarface* you don't see much media – but in the 90s version of the gangster movie (or at least in this one) they exist only through the media.

The next step is to say, let's deliver the spirit of the time – and it's a heated, hyper-kinetic, absurd time. We have a woman cutting off a man's penis and she's celebrated for it – when I grew up she would have appeared in the pages of the *National Enquirer* but the story would not have made network TV. Two boys kill their mother and father and they're celebrated and acquitted. The most ridiculous story is two female ice-skaters having a fight – a piece of trivia that made such an impact internationally that the Winter Olympics were watched for the first time by an extraordinary amount of people, putting I estimate \$500 million into the network's pocket. Money has created the heat – Chayevsky was very clear about that with *Network* – which is also one of our godfathers. The money has driven 90s society to boiling point.

The movie in a sense is constructed via television and as a homage to television – someone said this movie is like watching two weeks of television in two hours. There's the aggression of the imagery, the channel-surfing philosophy of moving on. Mallory sees her life via television. You don't want to remember pain, you don't want to remember your father raping and abusing you, so you filter it via a sitcom TV unreality and then you can escape from it. Early on in the movie, form-wise, you see a constant shifting of channels – like when you jump television channels, the style of the movie is constantly changing. You go from Mickey and Mallory's point of view to Wayne Gayle's point of view to that of the Indian [Russell Means]. First we start inside Mickey and Mallory's minds. They're desensitised to feelings, they're television creatures, the products of their parents. They kill without realising the consequences. (As an aside,

there is a justification for this in Mickey's mind – he gets busted for car theft and sent to prison, Mallory visits him, he's in love with her and she tells him her father is continuing to abuse her and is pressing for more charges.)

So that's all happening in an objective reality outside the film's subjective viewpoints? It's not Mickey's fantasy?

That's happening in the real world. We're out of the sitcom at that point. Mickey breaks out of prison – it looks surreal, but it does happen. Then once they've killed the father and mother they're on the road to hell – in Buddhist thought, that's the worst crime you could commit. In the scene on the bridge, Mickey says, "As God of my universe", which is a key thought in the sense that the whole first part of the movie is structured like a virtual reality trip. The audience is in the driver's seat, but Mickey and Mallory are in charge of the world, they're having fun killing and you're having 'fun' watching it. It makes you confront yourself. The unpredictability, the hallucinatory, feverish aspect of changing from black and white to colour to video to 8 mm to animation – which is included because they are superheroes in their own minds – all these changes empower you, you control your environment, you can be what you want to be. Going from black and white to colour gives you a visual pop – such moments are not logical, but the return to colour makes the film look more vivid, which is the way Mickey and Mallory think.

It's a heightening of reality.

Yes. Controlling your universe, killing, having that power – all serial killers have talked about that sense of empowerment, they all feel a heightening of reality. That style is countered in the first 20 minutes by the TV-magazine slick style that applies to Wayne Gale. Then we return to Mickey and Mallory, and in the motel room scene the style shifts back and forth. The style for Scagnetti [Tom Sizemore], because he wants to imitate Mickey and fuck Mallory, goes towards a lurid, cheesy lookalike style, but with more tacky lighting than Mickey's. The Indian sequence has a heightened, mystic realism – the fire, the sense of cutting, of catching your own words. It's deliberately slowed down to create an inward-looking mood.

Did you see this sequence as pivotal in the narrative structure?

Yes – killing the Indian gets them off the trip. What the American Indian gives them is some kind of spiritual consciousness. He gives it to Mallory and she gives it to Mickey. She changes first, then he changes over the course of time because he's a little more stupid than her. She has remorse, her feelings change, it's not fun any more.

Then in the prison we have another style – we're coming into the world of Warden McCluskey and his style is one of paranoia and punishment. He is a highly aggressive man, as aggressive as Mickey; he keeps everybody down until they explode. In a sense it's Frankenstein's castle – there's a shot of Frankenstein in the montage. Everything is distorted: the cuts, the timing, big black faces come up because the Warden is scared. There's a moment where a black prisoner comes and talks to him and he can't hear what he's saying – it's a very paranoid style.

For me, Mickey writing the letter to Mallory is very important. He has been in prison for a year and he says, I'm thinking about you every day –

he is reintegrating his feelings, getting in touch with himself. By the time he talks to Wayne Gale in the interview he is no longer the Mickey of the first half, he has become an articulate individual, as do many people who go to prison and have time to think. I find him articulate; some people find him totally cynical, using Gayle.

You could also argue that he has the calm and clarity of a psychotic.

Great. I like that. The interview is based on the Manson-Geraldo interview of 1981 or 1982, which was fascinating. Essentially Mr Manson dances intellectual circles around Geraldo, who maintains one posture, condescension towards Manson: "You're the killer, I'm the good guy, don't kid me, you're behind bars, thank God." That's basically Wayne Gayle's attitude, though he's totally hypocritical because as we see later, his own violence erupts.

Both Scagnetti and Gayle act out their fantasies about being killers.

I can't tell you how many people I've met who have similar fantasies. I've been in Vietnam and people often want to talk to me about that and fantasise trying it. Mickey says to Gayle that the demon is everywhere – in prison, in the world – he was born in it, his father was born in it, the century is soaked in it. Then he says, "Look at your shadow, you can't repress your shadow." He's saying you must acknowledge the demon, that's the first step.

I believe that all of us are born violent – we're natural born aggressors. We have a million-year-old reptilian brain with a neo-cortex of civilisation on top, but it's doing a bad job of concealing the aggression. Killing is a combination of genetics and environment. When I go to my son's school, I notice a lot of aggression in kids, a natural cruelty. How are we to deal with it? My way would be to show kids images of aggression – Kubrick's 2001 apemen, for instance – and say, this is you too. You are an animal. Next time you feel aggression in your schoolyard and want to slug your friend, recognise it as such – that's the beginning of getting a handle on it. If you know what it is that's making you blind with rage, you have taken the first step towards controlling the mood as opposed to having the mood control you.

Mickey is very sane when he says, "Deal with your aggression. Don't run from it," and then we cut to Warden McClusky sitting on his anger, wanting to kill Mickey. He's not dealing with his aggression, he's not acknowledging it. That's why the riot submerges the entire world of the prison. When Mickey says, "Murder is pure", that's not a skinhead statement, it's in the context of the media which makes it impure because it buys and sells fear. It's a Nietzschean statement, but pure Nietzsche, not the false Nietzsche used by the Nazis to pervert the message.

In the interview sequence, whose world are we in, Mickey's or Gayle's?

It's half and half. A lot of the shots are slick and there's a lot of stock footage when we cut to Mickey.

What about the riot, in terms of style?

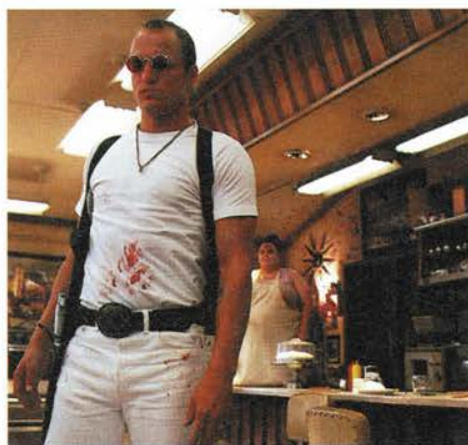
[Laughing] Let's call it Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers*! Chaos is an energy that takes over the movie at that point, it becomes a revolution of society, so we threw in every style we'd used until then in combination with a documentary style. When it cuts to the black people from the TV, it felt to me as though we were trying to cut to

outside from an inner story and become more objective – these are the masses, or this is a Soviet documentary. These people who don't know Mickey have another goal, which is to break out and destroy.

How does 'Natural Born Killers' stand in relation to the contract that exists between most mainstream American films and the audience?

Tough question. I'm not sure that this film obeys the contract. The usual characters are not there – who is the good guy, what is the catharsis of the film? It robs the audience of that and makes them question their watching, which is subversive. But why must there be a contract, why must there be a definition of a film? I prefer to go to a movie not knowing too much about it and just let it happen to me. It's a wholly subjective experience, going to the movies. It is the subjective chasing the subjective.

Natural Born Killers is not an easy movie to settle into, you can't get a point of view, you have to surrender to the movie. If you resist the movie with conventional ethics, you'll have a problem. The movie asks to be looked at as, in the old sense of the word, a meditation on violence. It's like taking acid in the 60s, you have to put aside your judgment. The first part is very disturbing, a desensitising rush. The second part in prison is about reintegration and has a different rhythm.



Getting his kicks: Woody Harrelson as Mickey in 'Natural Born Killers'

'I would show kids images of aggression – Kubrick's '2001' apemen, for instance – and say, this is you too. You are an animal'

And since for me the only relationship in the movie that is pure is Mickey and Mallory's, the conventional catharsis for me would be the moment where they're reunited for the kiss in the cell and the music breaks into 'Sweet Jane'.

It's interesting that you cut away to the TV anchorwoman's reaction at that moment – and she seems moved.

Yes, she's smiling. She's totally bewildered at the shock, but she just feels good, she doesn't care about anybody being killed. She's the audience, looking at the riot as though she can't believe it, and then going into this decontextualised moment.

She represents every television viewer who reacts in a moment-to-moment way to whatever they're presented with, without any sense of context...

...History or future. And human too – emotions and sentimentality reign. In a sense Mickey and Mallory are the only ones you can root for, they're anti-heroes but the movie questions the concept of moral relativity. Yes, they kill 52 people and it's unpardonable, but in a century that has killed 100 million in genocide, how big is their crime?

In the courtroom sequence cut from the film, Mickey defends himself by making reference to the state's legitimising of murder through war with the line, "How many people do you have to kill before it becomes legal – or even subsidised?"

He was talking about corporate predation. The movie plays on that relativistic level throughout. What is violence, what is murder?

To me, the key element of the ending wasn't the compilation of real-life media crime cases with Waco, O. J. and the Menendez brothers, but the rapid montage of demons that follows it.

I call that the demon gallery.

It seems to suggest that there is no escape, no end.

The movie has an ambivalent ending. The song Leonard Cohen sings over the closing montage says "The future is murder", but also "Love is the only engine of survival". Leonard is as tough as they come and he's grim. But there's a genuine romantic underneath the hardness of his lyrics and I think the same is true of myself. People say 'Heart of Stone', but others have pointed out that I'm a sucker and sentimental.

The underlying philosophy of the film is not the media satire, but the concept of aggression in this century versus compassion and love. You might say that's ridiculous because they never do anything totally loving, and they don't. But there's another Cohen song, 'Anthem', at the very end, where he says, "You need a crack of light to come through". That's what's happening in this movie – you don't need a lot of compassionate love to make the point. The fact that the most violent man in the movie can talk about love, whether you believe him or not, indicates a crack of light.

The highest virtue of Buddhism is non-violence because Buddhists understand that violence is all around. The nature of violence is the nature of man. Mickey has understood that – he says a moment of realisation is worth a thousand prayers. Somebody said that's a cynical remark, but I believe he means it. That's what makes him for me the character who is most easy to identify with.

You seem to be trying to use contemporary music and culture as a medium for communicating with a younger generation some distance from your own. I can't think of another film-maker in your position who has attempted to speak to mass youth culture on its own terms.

◀ The younger generation is very ironic about media, they doubt everything they see, they're not cynical, they're sceptical and rightly so. When I made *The Doors* younger people would come up to me in the street and tell me they loved it. I was interested by that because the film had been reviled by older people. It made me feel there was a left brain phenomenon in films that could connect with kids. We felt it when we were kids, with films like *El Topo* where we'd go into a dream state. I was exposed to lyrics and music I hadn't heard before through my producers and editors. I particularly liked Trent Reznor's 'Nine Inch Nails' because of the pain in the music – maybe it's a hurt that goes to the collective unconscious. It doesn't matter if you're from the 90s generation or the 60s or the 30s, when you were young you were young, and if you're in touch with those feelings you remember them.

Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam gave me a song, 'Footsteps', in which there is a line, "In the old days you committed suicide, in the new days you lash out", something like that. Hurt is in the collective unconscious, I was hurt as a kid. The reason I went to Vietnam was because I wanted to commit suicide, but I didn't want to pull the trigger so I went there instead. Younger generations have an essential agony that they go through – though not all: some just go right to the golf course. But this film feels right to me, for my age. The idea of killing 52 people would never have occurred to me in 1969, even after *Bonnie and Clyde*. The idea when they killed was that they were victims of the Depression. But in *Natural Born Killers* they kill because they kill, there's no moral sense or excuse for it.

Doesn't your Lee Harvey Oswald have a lot in common with Mickey and Mallory – generational social alienation, a kind of Cold War outlaw?

Yes, absolutely. Gary Oldman picked up on that right away. Oswald was not a bogeyman, there's an in-depth, anguished man in there who's very bright. There's a Charles Manson quality to Oswald that I can identify with. Manson is a brilliant man and his trial is still suspect. He never killed anybody, we all know that, he is convicted of inciting others to kill.

Don't you think he was dangerous?

Charles Manson is us. He is a product of our society. He had a horrible childhood and he was in prison at the earliest age. He's us because we created the system that's done this to him. It's come back to haunt us. *Natural Born Killers* is also about this us-them duality. You can't separate yourself from the aggression. It's universal.

In the prison sequence you used real convicts as extras.

In the scene in the dining room where Warden McClusky breaks up a fight, were all those prisoners real?

Most of them. The two men who were fighting are both killers, both in for life. The white guy with the bald head is a real psycho who bashed in his wife's face and killed his kids. In the riot, the people the prisoners killed were our stuntmen.

The sequence where the Warden and Scagnetti walk through the prison is remarkable.

It was the hardest scene to cut, I think we cut it 30 times, and it's set to how many different songs? 'Checkpoint Charlie' and 'The Violation of Expectation', 'The Day the Niggaz Took Over', 'Ghost Town' – that was a long, loopy, hallucinogenic thing to create the impression that the Warden had no concept of what was going on in that prison.

There are certain strange moments of suspension in the film that arrest the action for a few seconds – when Warden McClusky laughs, you go to a different angle, a different format and it's in slow motion I think and there's different music over it and the sound fades out.

You're looking for the fact that something is different in the Warden than has been pictured in the previous frame of him. The effect of the shot is, he seems nuts.

Many of those inserts suggest a bestial conception of human nature.

Yes. Impending violence. The best moment is when Scagnetti breaks into his own philosophical *raison d'être*, with his mother being shot by Charles Whitman, the Texas sniper.

Is that actual documentary footage of the shooting that we see?

Some of it is. So Charles Whitman killed Scagnetti's mom and we cut ironically to a boy who is supposed to be the young Scagnetti, but in fact is the young Mickey – it's done to suggest the concept of a collective unconscious of agony. His childhood is Mickey's childhood – what difference does it make? Then it cuts to a butterfly and a beautiful romantic moment. There is beauty in life, there is a moment in the midst of this hell where the butterfly can come in.

Was there any underlying logic to the intercutting of different formats?

No. It was based on editing gut-instinct. You could post-rationalise it, but you'd be hard pressed to write a thesis on it.

Not even the high-contrast black and white 35 mm, which seemed to be used for all the flashbacks of true, formative memories?

Certainly that works, most startlingly with the close-ups of Mallory's father's eyes. But later we see his eyes in colour, through the fire, which defeats your analysis. If that was a true moment for her, it should have been in black and white throughout.

So it was shot in colour and processed to black and white?

No, the black and white was shot as black and white. We also filmed his eyes in colour. But certainly that flashback of her father's sexual abuse stands out because it alternates with the colour. We couldn't have done this movie without doing JFK, which also had a lot of fractured reality moments.

Most critical reception of the film has made reference to MTV, but in fact most of the film's techniques originate in the experimental avant-garde of the 60s and 70s, which MTV has plundered. Which reminds me – someone told me that Stan Brakhage is a fan of 'JFK'.

I saw his films back in 1968 at a film co-operative in New York. They made a very strong impression on me. No storylines.

In terms of its form, doesn't the film raise a lot of questions about the medium of cinema? For instance, the idea of a unified, coherent text is all but swept away – or is the film only superficially incoherent?

[Laughs] Well, it's coherent to me. It's very clear to me that definite misunderstandings arise. Is it my fault for not having clarified? Possibly, but haven't I been criticised eternally for being heavy handed? This is a hall of many mirrors. I think it's coherent, but it's evolving too, with open-ended imagery at points which throw you off kilter.

For me, a good example is the recurring shot of the headless corpse in the armchair. I didn't think that was Mickey's memory of an actual event so much as of something he saw on TV.

Or his father with his head blown off.

But he committed suicide in a field. So was it transferred

to a different setting?

It could have been. It's just a horror image. And it's an image of the demon inside. But an old horror movie could be just as true.

What about the rabbit?

At the end of the final montage there's the image of the rabbit. Mickey and Mallory may have got away, but our culture has left us with a residue of fear. Either in Hindu or American Indian culture the rabbit is a symbol not just of fertility but of fear. Let's say that fear is one of the legacies of our generation. We've bombarded the world population with bad news. Crime has remained flat as a statistic since Vietnam, but Vietnam, the television war, brought the virus into the living room. Nixon – law and order; Reagan – let's build up our muscles; Bush – Willie Horton, the black parolee. Crime has been politicised, crime is perceived as the number one issue in America. What's the American vision now? Orwell's 1984 come true: don't go out because there's a black mugger outside, don't have sex because you'll get Aids, dial Barry Diller's QVC Home Shopping Network. A joyless, non-thinking life – the ultimate passive consumer.

So the rabbit is an image of a fearful population – an image Orwell himself used in '1984', I think.

That's what I'm trying to say.

This film suggests doubt about film's suitability as a medium of truth or to represent reality.

How often have we heard, "The book had more density"? Reading allows you to experience multifaceted points of view and depth that you don't get in a movie. I feel the limitations of movies because I'm interested in writing. In a sense this movie for me has pushed to the limits of 2D.

Did you feel things went too far in any area?

The earlier cuts were more chaotic and I did screenings on an extensive basis before the ratings board because I was scared our grammar was too fast and over everyone's heads.

So do you have doubts about cinema?

I think I'm expressing doubt about life. This picture was made in a darker spot in my life. We were so far out there that it was scary. Our nature is a struggle between aggression and love. Obviously Vietnam clarified that for me, but I wasn't totally aware of it when I got back. I killed over there. I have still to deal with that.

I have tried. It's become apparent to me that my films are violent. People would say that for years and I would deny it, I wouldn't face up to the violence in myself. I'm beginning to now. This film came from that spot. It was an explosion of violence right after the most non-violent film I've made, *Heaven & Earth*. Why would I do that? It was a totally contradictory move. What happened?

I don't know. Part of me is scared, and wants to say, let's pull back, let's make a film that is understandable to everyone, that's sweeter, that the whole country can believe in, like *Forrest Gump*.

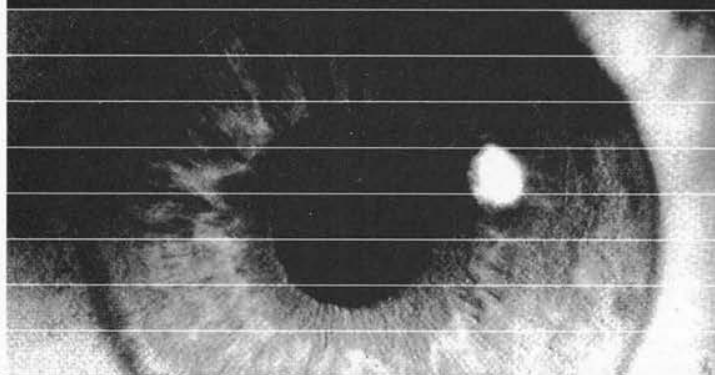
So does 'Forrest Gump' prove that love beats the demon?

No. Because the demon is never allowed to manifest itself in its full force and clarity. Gump goes through a hard time but there's a denial going on about the Vietnam war, about protesters, his relationship to women... it's an ostrich type of solution to history – stick your head in the sand. I like the film, it works on many levels, but anyone who went out and experimented dies of Aids or gets their legs blown off. It's the opposite of what I'm saying. But I would like to make an escapist film.

Why do I have to provoke each time?

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'Psycho' shocked and terrorised its early audiences, reinventing a kind of cinema with the qualities of a rollercoaster ride. But how did Hitchcock school and discipline his viewers? By Linda Williams

LEARNING TO SCREAM



● Talk to psychoanalytic critics about *Psycho* and they will tell you how perfectly the film illustrates the perverse pleasures of cinema. Talk to horror aficionados about *Psycho* and they will tell you the film represents the moment when horror moved from what is outside and far away to what is inside us all and very close to home.

But talk to anyone old enough to have seen *Psycho* on its release in a movie theatre and they will tell you what it felt like to be scared out of their wits. I vividly remember a Saturday matinee in 1960 when two girlfriends and I spent much of the screening with our eyes shut listening to the music and to the audience's screams as we tried to guess when we might venture to look again at a screen whose terrors were unaccountably thrilling.

Most people who saw *Psycho* for the first time in a theatre have similarly vivid memories. Many will recall the shock of the shower murder and how they were afraid to take showers for months or years afterwards. But if it is popularly remembered that *Psycho* altered the bathing habits of a nation, it is less well recalled how it fundamentally changed viewing habits.

When the purposeful, voyeuristic camera eye investigating Marion Crane's love affair and theft of \$40,000 'washed' down the drain in a vertiginous spiral after the shower murder, audiences took pleasure in losing the kind of control they had been trained to enjoy in classical narrative cinema. With *Psycho*, cinema in some ways reverted to what the critic Tom Gunning has described as the "attractions" of pre-classical cinema – an experience that has more of the effect of a rollercoaster ride than the absorption of a classical narrative.

Anyone who has gone to the movies in the last 20 years cannot help but notice how entrenched this rollercoaster sensibility of repeated tension and release, assault and escape has become. While narrative is not abandoned, it often takes second place to a succession of visual and auditory shocks and thrills which are, as Thomas Schatz puts it in 'The New Hollywood', "visceral, kinetic, and fast paced, increasingly reliant on special effects, increasingly 'fantastic'... and increasingly targeted at younger audiences." Schatz cites *Jaws* (1975) as the precursor of the New Hollywood calculated blockbuster, but the film that set the stage for the "visceral, kinetic" appeal of post-classical cinema was *Psycho*.

From the very first screenings, audience reaction, in the form of gasps, screams, yells, even running up and down the aisles, was unprecedented. Although Hitchcock later claimed to have calculated all this, saying he could hear the screams when planning the shower montage, screenwriter Joseph Stefano counters, "he was lying... We had no idea. We thought people would gasp or be silent, but screaming? Never." Contemporary reviews were in no doubt that audiences were screaming as never before: "So well is the picture made... that it can lead audiences to do something they hardly ever do any more – cry out to the characters, in hopes of dissuading them from going to the doom that has been cleverly



Learning how to look: women watching 'Psycho', opposite; and men, above

established as awaiting them" (Ernest Callenbach, *Film Quarterly*, Fall 1960).

But having unleashed such reactions, the problem Hitchcock and every theatre manager now faced was how to keep them from getting out of hand. According to Anthony Perkins, the entire scene in the hardware store following the shower murder, the mopping up and disposal of Marion's body in the swamp was usually inaudible thanks to leftover howls from the previous scene. According to Stephen Rebello in *The Making of Psycho*, Hitchcock even asked Paramount to allow him to remix the sound to allow for the audience's reaction. Permission was denied.

Hitchcock's unprecedented "special policy" of allowing no one into the theatre once the film had begun was one means both of encouraging, and handling, the mayhem. It also ensured that audiences would fully appreciate the shock of having the rug pulled out from under them so thoroughly in the surprise murder of the main character in the shower. Most importantly, however, it transformed the previously casual act of going to the movies into a much more disciplined activity of arriving on time and waiting in an orderly line.

Hitchcock's insistence that no one be admitted late to the film supposedly came to him during the editing: "I suddenly startled my fellow-workers with a noisy vow that my frontwards-sideways-and-inside-out labors on *Psycho* would not be in vain – that everyone else in the world would have to enjoy the fruits of my labor to the full by seeing the picture from beginning to end. This was the way the picture was conceived – and this was how it had to be seen" (*Motion Picture Herald*, 6 August 1960). In a narrow sense, this simply meant that having worked so hard to set up the surprise of the shower murder, Hitchcock wanted to make sure that it was fully appreciated. In the larger sense, however, his demand that the audience

arrive on time would eventually lead to the set show times, closely spaced screenings, elimination of cartoons and short subjects and patient waits in lines that are now standard procedure.

Critics obliged Hitchcock by promoting the new policy: "At any other entertainment from ice show to baseball games, the bulk of the patrons arrive before the performance begins. Not so at the movies which have followed the policy of grabbing customers in any time they arrive, no matter how it may impair the story for those who come in midway" (*View*). Columnist Stan Delaplane describes in detail the experience of going to see *Psycho* and captures something of the psychological undertones of the new film-viewing discipline.

"There was a long line of people at the show – they will only seat you at the beginning and I don't think they let you out while it's going on... A loudspeaker was carrying a sound track made by Mr. Hitchcock.

"He said it was absolutely necessary – he gave it the British pronunciation like 'nessary.' He said you absolutely could not go in at the beginning.

"The loudspeaker then let out a couple of female shrieks that would turn your blood to ice. And the ticket taker began letting us all in.

"A few months ago, I was reading the London review of this picture. The British critics rapped it. 'Contrived,' they said. 'Not up to the Hitchcock standards.'

"I do not know what standards they were talking about. But I must say that Hitchcock... did not seem to be that kind of person at all. Hitchcock turned us all on.

"Of all the shrieking and screaming! We were all limp. And, after drying my palms on the mink coat next to me, we went out to have hamburgers. And let the next line of people go in and die.

"Well, if you are reading the trade papers, ►

SCREENING 'PSYCHO'

The training film 'The Care and Handling of Psycho', from left to right: a customer arrives too late; the ticket-holders' line; women wait outside the DeMille Theater for a matinee; the loudspeaker broadcasting Hitchcock's message; a Pinkerton guard in the lobby



◀ you must know that *Psycho* is making a mint of money.

"This means we are in for a whole series of such pictures." (*Los Angeles Examiner*, 9 December 1960)

Obviously the audience described by Delaplane was docile. Their fun was dependent upon this docility. Yet we can see an element of playful performance at work in this evocation of the exhilaration of a group submitting itself to a thrilling sensation of fear and release. In this highly ritualised masochistic submission to a familiar 'master', we see shrieking and screaming understood frankly as a 'turn on', followed by a highly sexualised climax ("go in and die"), a limp feeling, and then a renewal of (literal and metaphorical) appetite. This audience, despite its mix of class (mink and hamburgers) and gender, has acquired a new sense of itself as bonded around certain terrifying sexual secrets. The shock of learning these secrets produces both a discipline and, around that discipline, a camaraderie, a pleasure of the group that was both new to motion pictures and destabilising to the conventional gender roles of audiences.

Another important tool in disciplining the *Psycho* audience were the promotional trailers. All three hinted at, but unlike most "coming attractions" refrained from showing too much of, the film's secrets. In the most famous of these, Hitchcock acts as a house-of-horror tour guide at the Universal International Studios set of the Bates Motel and adjacent house (now the Universal Studios Theme Park featuring the *Psycho* house and motel). Each trailer stresses the importance of special discipline: either "please don't tell the ending, it's the only one we have", or the need to arrive on time.

But there was another trailer, not seen by the general public yet even more crucial in inculcating discipline into the audience. Called 'The Care and Handling of *Psycho*', this was not a preview but a filmed 'press book' teaching theatre managers how to exhibit the film and police the audience.

The black and white film begins with the pounding violins of Bernard Herrmann's score over a street scene outside the DeMille Theater in New York, where *Psycho* was first released. A long line waits on the sidewalk for a matinee. An urgent-sounding narrator explains that the man in the tuxedo is a theatre manager in charge of implementing the policy for exhibiting the film – a policy which has placed him out on the sidewalk directing traffic for the "blockbuster". The film then explains the key elements of the procedure, beginning with the broadcasting, in Hitchcock's own sly, disem-

bodied voice, of the message that "this queuing up is good for you, it will make you appreciate the seats inside. It will also make you appreciate *Psycho*." The mixture of polite inducement, backed up by the presence of Pinkerton guards and a life-size lobby cardboard cut-out of Hitchcock sternly pointing to his watch, seem comical today because we have so thoroughly assimilated the lessons of punctuality and secret-keeping.

Part of the fun of the film is Hitchcock's playfully sadistic pose mixed with an over-solicitous concern for the audience's pleasure. He asks the waiting crowd to keep the "tiny, little horrifying secrets" of the story because he has only their best interests in mind. (According to Rebello, the strategy succeeded – when shaken spectators leaving the theatre were grilled by those waiting in line, they answered only that the film had to be seen.) He then insists on the democracy of a policy that will not make exceptions for the Queen of England or the manager's brother.

Punctuated by short glimpses of a screaming woman (who isn't Janet Leigh – could it be her double?) and Herrmann's unsettling score, this training film is a fascinating record of the process by which film-going became both a more gut-wrenching experience and a more disciplined act. Exploiting his popular television persona of the man who loves to scare you, Hitchcock also went one better than television by providing the kind of big-jolt ride the small screen could not convey. And he obtained the kind of rapt attention that would have been the envy of a symphony orchestra from an audience more associated with the distractions of amusement parks than with the disciplines of high culture.

In *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, Lawrence Levine has written compellingly about the taming of American audiences during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Levine argues that while American theatre audiences in the first half of the century were a highly participatory and unruly lot, arriving late, leaving early, spitting tobacco, talking back to the actors, stamping feet and applauding promiscuously, they were gradually taught by the arbiters of culture to "submit to creators and become mere instruments of their will, mere auditors of the pro-

If you want me to make you scream in a new way about taboo sexual secrets, then line up patiently to receive the thrill

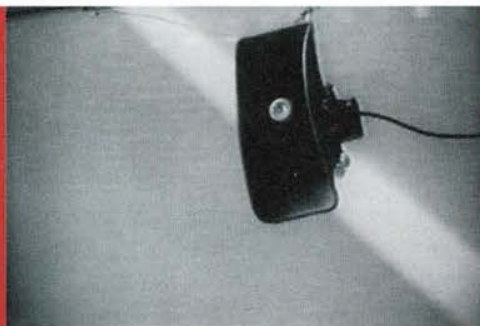
ductions of the artist." Certainly Hitchcock asserts "the will of the artist" to "tame" his audience, but this will is in the service of producing visceral thrills and ear-splitting screams rather than the passivity and silence Levine describes. Hitchcock's disciplining of the audience is a more subtle exercise of power, productive rather than repressive, in Michel Foucault's sense of the term, merging knowledge and power in the production of pleasure.

In the discipline imposed by Hitchcock, the efficiency and control demonstrated outside the theatre need to be viewed in tandem with the patterns of fear and release unleashed inside. And this discipline, not unlike that demanded by the emerging theme parks, was not based on the division of audiences into high and low, nor, as would later occur through the ratings system, was it based on the stratification of different age groups. In Hitchcock's assumption of the persona of the sadist who expects his submissive audience to trust him to provide a devious form of pleasure, we see a new bargain struck between artist and audience: if you want me to make you scream in a new way and about these previously taboo sexual secrets, then line up patiently to receive the thrill.

While the training film offers us a look at the audience for *Psycho* outside the theatre, photographs taken with infra-red cameras during screenings at the Plaza Theatre in London and issued in an oversized press kit by Paramount, the film's distributor (see pages 14 and 15), provide an insight into what went on inside. The intense-looking audience, jaws set, stares hard at the screen, with the exception of a few people with averted eyes. The somewhat defensive postures indicate anticipation – arms are crossed, while several people hold their ears, suggesting the importance of sound in cueing terror.

On the whole the men are looking intently, some with hands up towards their face or chin. One man is dramatically clutching his tie while holding it out from his body; another bites his fingers while the young man next to him both smokes a cigarette and grabs his cheek. It is women in these pictures who look down, including the woman whose hand covers her mouth sitting next to the cool male smoker.

How are we to interpret these images of an audience showing its fear? Is it possible that a discipline, albeit of a different kind, operated inside as well as outside the theatre? Of course, we have no way of knowing at what point in the movie these shots were taken. But we do know that the film's scariest moments occur before and during the appearances of 'Mrs Bates' and



that these appearances result in the highly feminised terror first of Marion, then of subsequent victims.

The terrified female victim is a cliché of horror cinema: both the display of sexual arousal and the display of fear are coded as quintessentially feminine. As Carol J. Clover puts it in *Men, Women and Chain Saws*, “abject fear” is “gendered feminine”. The image of a highly sexualised and terrified woman is thus the most conventionally gendered of the film.

Much less conventional is the ostensible cause of this terror: ‘Mrs Bates’. Apparently gendered feminine, yet equipped with a phallic knife, ‘Mrs Bates’ represented a new kind of movie monster. But Hitchcock’s decision to turn the traditional monster of horror cinema into a son who dresses up as his own mummified mother was not so much about giving violent power to a castrating ‘monstrous feminine’ as about deploying the sensational pleasures of a sexually indeterminate drag.

“He’s a transvestite!”, says the District Attorney in a famously inadequate attempt to explain the roots of Norman’s behaviour. Certainly Norman is no mere transvestite – that is, a person whose sexual pleasure involves dressing up as the opposite sex – but rather a much more deeply disturbed individual whose whole personality, according to the psychiatrist’s lengthy discourse, has at times “become the mother”. Yet in the scene that supposedly shows us that Norman has “become” the mother, what we in fact see is Norman, now without wig and dress, sitting alone and reflecting, in the most feminine of the many voices given ‘Mrs Bates’, on the evil of ‘her’ son. In other words, while ostensibly illustrating that Norman now ‘is’ the mother, the scene provides a visual and aural variation on Norman’s earlier sexual indeterminacy. The shock of this scene is the combination of young male body and older female voice: it is not the recognition of one identity overcome by another that fascinates so much as the tension between masculine and feminine. The penultimate shot of Norman’s face, from which briefly emerges the grinning mouth of Mrs Bates’ corpse, drives this home.

The psychiatrist’s contention that Norman is entirely his mother is therefore unproven. Instead, these variations of drag become an ironic, and by this point almost camp, play with audience expectations that gender is fixed. Norman is not a transvestite, but transvestism – an incomplete assimilation to one or the other pole of the gender binary – is an attraction of these scenes.

But if gender performance is a newly impor-

tant element within the film, how does it also figure for the audience in viewing *Psycho*? I would argue that a destabilisation of gender roles takes place both on screen and in the theatre, and that even the most classic-seeming masculine and feminine forms of behaviour take on parodic elements of performance that destabilise gender-fixed reactions.

Thus while the men in the audience look conventionally masculine, while they appear to stay cool in the face of danger and to look steadily at the screen, there is something just a little forced about their poses. In the face of the gender-confused source of terror on screen, their dogged masculinity seems staged. The more masculine they try to appear – as with the man clutching his tie – the more it is clear that a threat of femininity has been registered.

The cringing and ducking women, on the other hand, assume classic attitudes of frightened femininity. Yet here too the exaggeration suggests a pleasurable and self-conscious performance. I once interpreted this classic women’s reaction as a sign of resistance: that women resisted assault on their own gaze by refusing to look at the female victims of male monstrosity. However, this notion of resistance simply assumed a masculine monster and the displeasure of horror for female spectators. Now I am more inclined to think that if some of the women in the audience were refusing to

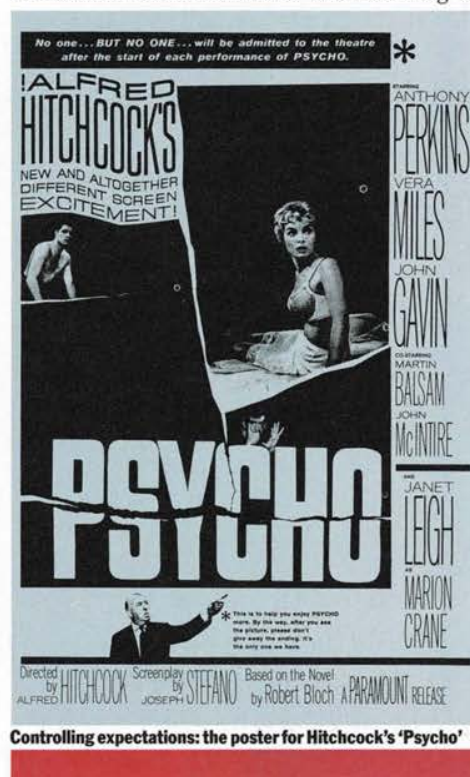
look at the screen, then they were also, like my girlfriends and I, at the early stages of assimilating a discipline that was teaching us how to look – emboldening us to look as the men did, in the interest of experiencing greater thrills.

We also need to recognise what these photographs cannot show us: that these disciplines of gender performance evolved over time and, though they seem fixed here, were actually thrown into flux by *Psycho*. Male and female spectators who either stared stoically or clutched themselves, covered eyes, ears, and recoiled in fear at the shower murder may have been responding involuntarily, and quite conventionally, the first time, to an unexpected assault. But by the film’s second assault, this audience was already beginning to play the game of anticipation and to repeat its response in either gender conventional or gender transgressive – but in both cases increasingly performative – gestures.

By the time the game of slasher-assault had become a genre in the mid and late 70s, by the time a film like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* took on its own performative life, by the time the erotic thriller had become a newly invigorated genre in the 80s and 90s, this disciplined performing audience was to give way to the equivalent of the kids who raise their hands in rollercoaster rides and call out, “Look Ma, no hands!”

The dislocations between masculine and feminine, between normal and psychotic, between eros and fear, even between the familiar Hitchcockian suspense and a new, gender-based horror were new in *Psycho*. And it is these qualities that make it the precursor to the kinds of thrill-producing visual “attractions” that would become fundamental to the New Hollywood. After making *Psycho*, Hitchcock boasted of his power to control audience response, saying that if you “designed a picture correctly in terms of its emotional impact, the Japanese audience would scream at the same time as the Indian audience.” It might seem that the photographs of the *Psycho* audience bear him out – certainly they exhibit his power to elicit response – yet there is reason to suspect a level of calculation behind his emotional engineering. We have seen that Hitchcock was in fact taken aback by the screams *Psycho* produced. Perhaps his elaborate attempts to stage the experience of the film’s screenings were simply bids to regain control over an audience response which scared even him.

Special thanks to Michael Friend of the Academy Library for showing me the cinema managers’ training film *The Care and Handling of Psycho*. ‘Psycho’ is available on CIC Video



Controlling expectations: the poster for Hitchcock's 'Psycho'



From De Quincey to Michael Powell, the English have been epicures in murder. What is the violence that drives Powell's 'Peeping Tom'?
By Peter Wollen

DYING FOR ART

● In 1827 Thomas De Quincey, famous as the English opium-eater, wrote his celebrated essay 'Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts'. Although the theme of this essay is self-evident, it is treated somewhat ironically, and we can find a much balder and more provocative statement of the author's beliefs in his lesser-known article 'On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*', written two years earlier. Here he describes the notorious East London murderer John Williams in the following terms: "At length, in 1812, Mr Williams made his debut on the stage of Ratcliffe Highway, and executed those unparalleled murders which have procured for him such a brilliant and undying reputation. On which murders, by the way, I must observe, that in one respect they have had an ill-effect, by making the connoisseur in murder very fastidious in his taste, and dissatisfied with anything that has been done since in that line. All other murders look pale by the deep crimson of his; and, as an amateur



once said to me in a querulous tone, 'There has been absolutely nothing *doing* since his time, or nothing that's worth speaking of.' But this is wrong, for it is unreasonable to expect all men to be great artists, and born with the genius of Mr. Williams."

De Quincey set out to justify Shakespeare's perplexing stagecraft in *Macbeth* by referring the reader to Williams' stagecraft on the Ratcliffe Highway, explaining Shakespeare's dramatic genius by comparing his work to that of a recognised fellow-genius in the art of real-world murder. For De Quincey, "everything in the world has two handles - murder, for instance, may be laid hold of by its moral handle, or it may also be treated aesthetically." De Quincey once had the good fortune to meet the notorious Victorian serial killer Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, "a murderer of a freezing class, cool, calculating, wholesale in his operations". Wainewright was himself a poet, a painter, an aesthete and an art critic, a lover of Greek gems, Persian carpets, Florentine majolica and fine book-bindings, who carried his dandyism over into the sphere of crime not so long after De Quincey's article on murder was first published in *Blackwood's Magazine*. Needless to say, De Quincey was fascinated by his dinner companion.

Later, Oscar Wilde was to write a short essay on Wainewright, entitled 'Pen, Pencil and Poison'. "There is no essential incongruity," Wilde concluded, "between crime and culture. We cannot re-write the whole of history for the purpose of gratifying our moral sense of what

should be. Of course, he is far too close to our own time for us to be able to form any purely artistic judgement about him. It is impossible not to feel a strong prejudice against a man who might have poisoned Lord Tennyson, or Mr Gladstone, or the Master of Balliol. But had the man worn a costume and spoken a language different from our own, had he lived in imperial Rome, or at the time of the Italian Renaissance, or in Spain in the seventeenth century, or in any land or any century but this century and this land, we would be quite able to arrive at a perfectly unprejudiced estimate of his position and value."

When Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* was released in March 1960, it was greeted with a cascade of critical abuse and moral denunciation. It was in another land - France, needless to say - that its merits were first recognised and it was many more years before "a perfectly unprejudiced estimate of [its] position and value" could be made in Britain. Today, of course, *Peeping Tom* is acknowledged as the final masterpiece of a director who in the opinion of many was England's greatest film artist, and who, after the disaster of *Peeping Tom*, was driven out of the British film industry to finish his professional career in television and, finally, in Australia. As Richard Maltby has pointed out, the London critics and censors have ritualistically denounced violent films that are made in Britain. The spiv films of the 40s were consistently abused; and, after *Peeping Tom*, the next scapegoat was Sam Peckinpah's *Straw Dogs*.

Curiously, this position has its roots in the prejudices expounded in George Orwell's 1946 essay 'The Decline of English Murder', which draws a distinction between the artistic Victorian murders he cherished and the "pitiful and sordid" Cleft Chin murder currently grabbing the headlines, "a meaningless story, with its atmosphere of dance-halls, movie-palaces, cheap perfume, false names and stolen cars", lacking the dramatic structure and emotional depth displayed by the time-honoured classics of the genre. Orwell's essay, in which a nostalgic English aestheticism is affronted by a "wanton" murder committed by a philistine "americanized" couple, was published in *Tribune*, and it was in *Tribune* too that the most virulent attack on *Peeping Tom* was later made: "The only really satisfactory way to dispose of *Peeping Tom* would be to shovel it up and flush it swiftly down the nearest sewer. Even then the stench would remain."

Plainly, *Peeping Tom* triggered an intense outbreak of the moral panic which has traditionally greeted any striking display of violence in British cinema. By today's standards, *Peeping Tom* is not in fact an especially violent movie. Mark Lewis was much less brutal and bloody than De Quincey's hero, John Williams. He falls more closely into the category admired by Wilde and indeed Orwell, the middle-class aesthete gone terribly wrong. It has frequently been pointed out that Anglo-Amalgamated, which produced *Peeping Tom*, ventured into the horror genre because of the commercial success enjoyed by Hammer, which had turned to horror in the mid-50s and managed to prise open the American market with Terence ►

Looking for the last time: Mark Lewis' camera captures a victim as she watches her own murder, opposite; the dandy murderer with his machine, above

◀ Fisher's *The Curse of Frankenstein*. Yet *Peeping Tom* is very different from the films of the Hammer horror cycle. Its terror is much colder and more intellectualised. It is an extremely knowing and sophisticated film, a kind of deviant art film.

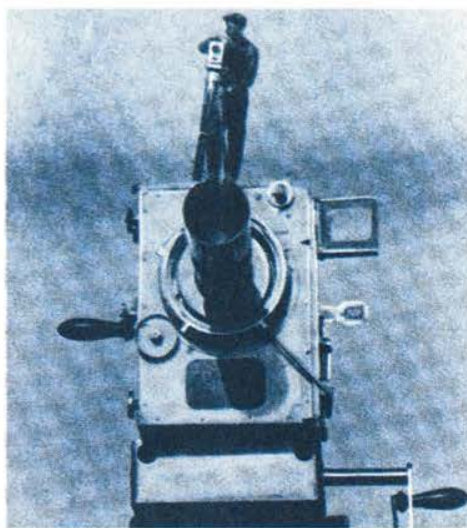
Essentially, *Peeping Tom* combines three distinct sub-genres – the serial killer film, the film-about-film and the psychoanalyst or clinical psychologist film. The serial killer film has a long pedigree. Beginning obliquely in Weimar Germany with *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* and *Pandora's Box*, it reached its culmination in Fritz Lang's *M*. It has included classics as weirdly diverse as Chaplin's *Monsieur Verdoux* and Laughton's *The Night of the Hunter*. It is a major force in contemporary cinema, encompassing Hollywood movies as different as Bigelow's *Blue Steel*, Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs* and Stone's *Natural Born Killers*, as well as midnight cult films such as *Henry*, *Portrait of a Serial Killer*, and off-beat documentaries such as Nick Broomfield's *Aileen Wournos: The Selling of a Serial Killer*. In this tradition, it seems significant that *Peeping Tom* was released in the same year as Hitchcock's *Psycho*, two films by the two greatest English directors, yet very different in their approach.

The film-about-film sub-genre has always been a favourite of cinephiles because it reflexively folds back their obsession with film on to film itself. For the same reason, it can be aligned with a kind of naive Modernism, a concentration of art upon its own materials and conditions of existence, both film and commentary on the nature of film. With *Peeping Tom* in mind, we might think of Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, which celebrates the power of the camera and its ability to penetrate and see where the human eye cannot. Vertov makes a Modernist hero out of the cameraman as he seeks out the truth in every avenue of life, filming women in childbirth in the hospital and chasing ambulances to the scene of violence. Another classic of the genre is Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, which, like *Peeping Tom*, dwells on the dialectic of the gaze, the intrusive look and its reciprocal engagement with the look of the other. The film-about-film, focusing on the camera as a crucial prop or even a virtual protagonist, necessarily becomes involved with the representation of voyeurism, at the moment it enters the field of violence and sexuality.

The psychoanalyst sub-genre also attracted Hitchcock – *Spellbound* was an early classic and *Psycho* too at least nods towards the form, although not until the end. In the English cinema proper, there was Compton Bennett's extraordinary melodrama *The Seventh Veil*, which came out in 1945, the same year as *Spellbound*, and the omnibus film *Dead of Night*, released the following year, which had an especially compelling episode directed by Alberto Cavalcanti. *Peeping Tom*'s roots are in this sub-genre. The scriptwriter, Leo Marks, had originally come to Powell with the idea of making a film about Freud himself, which had to be abandoned when they learned that John Huston had already embarked on his own Freud biopic. Essentially, *Peeping Tom* was a compro-

'I am not a director with a personal style. I am simply cinema.'
Michael Powell

The making of 'Peeping Tom': Peter Lorre in Fritz Lang's serial killer movie, 'M', top; Vertov's film-about-film, 'Man with a Movie Camera', centre; Ingrid Bergman in the psychoanalyst sub-genre classic 'Spellbound', bottom



mise formation, condensing the repressed Freud film with the surface Hammer horror film, by way of the voyeuristic implications of the film-about-film.

In *Peeping Tom*, as in *Spellbound*, the respected psychologist is himself the clinical case. Professor Lewis, like the psychiatrist in *Spellbound*, is an ambulatory psychotic whose pathology is socially acceptable and indeed socially honoured. It is only when it is transferred on to his son, its original victim, that it mutates into a psychosis which is socially condemned. Scientific scrutiny and veiled child abuse are transformed into voyeurism and murder, the penetrating gaze twinned with the penetrating switchblade. Thus the respected psychologist mutates, in the next generation, into the serial killer. But whereas in *Psycho* Norman Bates has an aggressive mother and an absent father, Mark Lewis has an aggressive father and an absent mother. Norman Bates ends his career of murder by becoming his mother, by being absorbed into her; Mark Lewis by killing the father-in-himself, finally eliminating him in a bizarre self-execution. While both Norman Bates and Mark Lewis are voyeurs, Mark Lewis extends his voyeurism even further, into a magical involvement with the camera and with film-making.

This marks the transition into the film-about-film. Mark Lewis' film-making project is a mechanised yet intensely private activity of self-expression, really a kind of art-work. As his friend Helen recognises, at root he is an artist. In this sense, his relationship to murder, though mediated through voyeurism, is more like that of the dandy murderer in *Rope* than of the obsessive observer-of-murder in *Rear Window*. The serial killer has become radically aestheticised. Indeed, the cult status of *Peeping Tom* comes largely from this aestheticisation of death. Superficially, there is an identification with the serial killer as outlaw, the frontiersman who lives on the margins, transgresses the norms of normal society, crosses forbidden boundaries. But more profoundly, this entails a fascination with death itself, expressed in the last analysis by Mark's project of experiencing to the fullest the moment of his own self-inflicted death. The aestheticisation of murder, in the tradition of De Quincey and Wilde, is founded on a death-wish which can easily turn inwards on the tormented self. We find the same aestheticised compulsion-towards-death in the final suicidal leap of Victoria Page in Michael Powell's other masterpiece, *The Red Shoes*, as her commitment to her art leads inexorably to her death and mutilation.

Early critical accounts of *Peeping Tom* concentrated on the issue of sadism, probably because the French critics who first praised the film, in *Positif* and *Midi-Minuit*, were heavily influenced by Surrealism and hence by André Breton's own fascination with the Marquis De Sade. More recently, academic discussion of the film has been dominated by psychoanalytic interpretations, concentrating on voyeurism and the concept of the look – an approach which has come to be known as 'gaze theory' and owes its origin to Laura Mulvey's pioneering essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. In the case of *Peep-*

ing Tom, psychoanalytic criticism is not simply imposed externally but is justified internally, from within the film itself. Not only was the collaboration between Powell and Marks initiated on the basis of their Freud project, but they allude directly to the concept of voyeurism in the film. The police assigned to Mark Lewis' murders bring in a psychoanalyst to help them with their investigations and he strikes up a conversation with Mark – the very murderer he is blindly seeking – which concludes with a discussion of Mark's father's own researches on the subject of scopophilia.

But sadism and voyeurism are not in themselves the central topics of *Peeping Tom*. Much more crucially, the film is about the pathological character of Mark's family. This explains not only his internalisation of his father's sadistic obsession with filming the spectacle of fear, but also his projection of sadism, through the medium of the camera, on to a succession of women who, in their willingness to be filmed, echo the sexual demonstrativeness of his hated stepmother. At the same time, in his relationship with the one woman he cannot and must not film, the shy and virginal Helen, he attempts to duplicate his relationship with his beloved mother. In fact, by chance, Helen is now sleeping in the same bedroom that was once his mother's room, and Helen's own mother is also the one person able to see his guilt – not literally, since she is blind, but intuitively through a kind of second sight. As Laura Mulvey points out in her audio-commentary on the Voyager video-disc of *Peeping Tom*, Helen's mother incarnates a visionary romanticism diametrically opposed to the positivist scientism of Mark's father. Like Mark, but for different reasons, she is an insomniac, a creature of the night whose solitary pleasure is to dream in the dark. Intuitively she understands the connection between cinema, the pathology of pornography and the burden of guilt and desire which drives Mark on his murderous career.

Mark's cruel father, however, is dead. He can no longer be harmed or punished by Mark, except in an ingeniously roundabout way. Mark must first become his sadistic father and then punish himself, in retribution both for his father's guilt, which he has re-enacted in the form of his own serial murders, and for his own guilt at his parricidal desire. Thus Mark's final suicide is built into his scheme from the beginning. In his essay on 'Dostoevsky and Parricide', Freud comments on how, for Dostoevsky, the experience of his own death could be imagined as a "moment of supreme bliss", the realisation of the death-wish he had originally directed at his own sadistic father. Now turned back on himself, it brings a glorious "sense of liberation", an "achievement of freedom", and thus of final triumph over the hated father. In the same essay (and also in his case study of Judge Schreber, tormented by a sadistic father who used his son as an experimental subject for his quasi-scientific studies of child development) Freud also discusses the relationship between misogyny and male horror of feminisation and passivity, brought about by the abusive father. In the case of Mark Lewis, tormented by the

Scriptwriter Leo Marks had originally come to Powell with the idea of making a film about Freud himself

paternal gaze, scopophilia is a secondary formation, a response to a more basic trauma and the instrument of a more basic desire.

For Mark Lewis, release from abject terror can come only with a return to sleep. When he himself becomes an adult, he both re-enacts his father's terroristic gaze and simultaneously must seek the unbreakable sleep which was denied him as a child. His suicide combines the two fantasies. He dies blinded by a repetition of the tormenting lights with which his father used to wake him and listening to his own childhood cries of fear, recorded by his father as research material. In his death, he experiences both ultimate possession by terror and ultimate blissful release. He has turned his father's murderous gaze upon himself in order to liberate himself from it, to escape it forever.

Just as Powell superimposes three sub-genres in *Peeping Tom*, he also superimposes the three looks which characterise the cinema (those of the spectator, the camera and the character in the film), simultaneously knotting together the three threads. When Mark, after filming his murders, sits at home in his private cinema to watch his "documentary", we see exactly what he sees projected, from his point of view as the film's spectator. We also, of course, see exactly what the camera saw as the instrument of his directorial vision. Finally, we see what the principal character of the film, the murder victim, saw at the moment of her own death. For Mark Lewis not only kills his victims as he films them, with a kind of swordstick blade that projects out from the foot of his camera tripod, but he has also attached a mirror to this murderous instrument, so that the victim will see herself reflected in it at the moment of her death.

Thus we see exactly what she saw, with her final terrorised gaze. The first look is that of the serial killer, the second that of the scientific instrument, the third the point of view of the victim, folded back on itself within the film, as she is compelled to be the observer of her own death.

This extravaganza of scopophilia does not simply foreground the process of looking. It

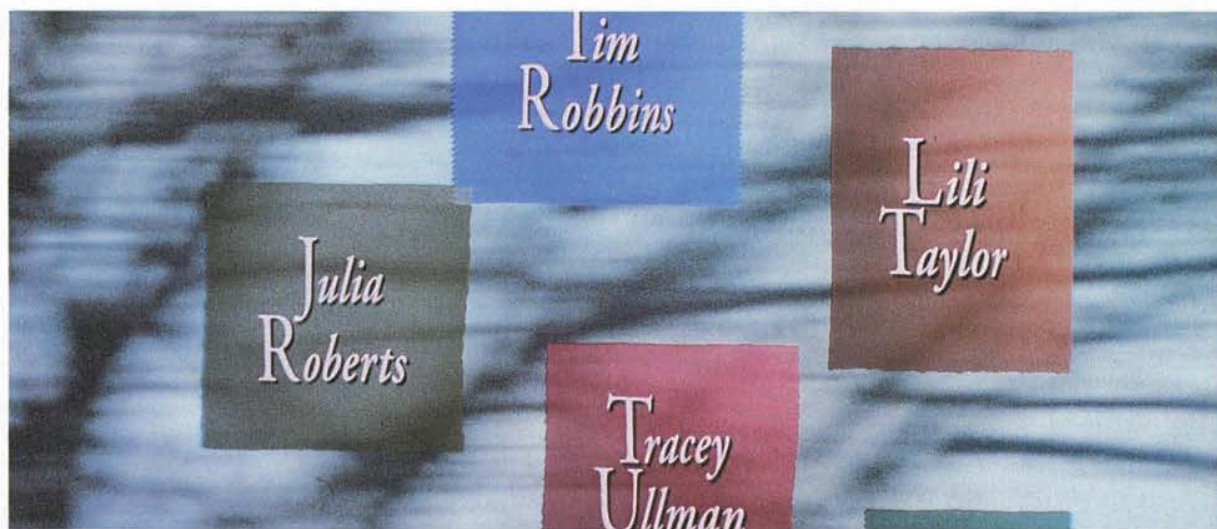
aestheticises the look. In the first instance, the murderer himself must enjoy the spectacle he has created, not simply as a documentary record, but as an ingeniously devised artefact. Second, the victim must not only be conscious of her own death, but must be conscious of her own consciousness of it. In the postscript which De Quincey added in 1854 to his 'Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts', he recounted an incident which illustrates the "ultra fiendishness" of John Williams. The killer, having just committed a series of bloody murders, comes across a sleeping servant girl. De Quincey explains that, as "an epicure in murder", driven by "pure aesthetical considerations", Williams must now wake the girl before he kills her. "It would take away the very sting of enjoyment, if the poor child should be suffered to drink off the bitter cup of death without fully apprehending the misery of the situation."

De Quincey goes on to note that, "except for the luxurious purpose of basking and revelling in the anguish of dying despair, he had no motive at all, great or small, for attempting the murder of this young girl." This instance of "a murder of pure voluptuousness" provides a romantic model for Mark Lewis' enjoyment in *Peeping Tom*. Now, however, the moment of voluptuousness is given an aesthetic complexity undreamed of by De Quincey. The spectator in the cinema is made conscious of Mark Lewis' consciousness of his victim's consciousness of her own consciousness of death.

Michael Powell does all he can to make us think of *Peeping Tom* as an extremely personal film. As has often been noted, the film is full of in-joke allusions to Powell's own film career, such as a satirical attack on John Davis, long-time head of production for Rank at Pinewood, where he was bitterly hated by Powell. Powell even locates the house in which Lewis lives directly across the street from his own real-world home in Melbury Road. Notoriously, he also appears in the black and white film-within-a-film as Mark Lewis' film-maker father, the Professor, and cast his own young son, Columba, as the child Mark. Thus he chose to represent himself within his own film not only as director, but also as psychologist, sadist and voyeur.

Powell saw himself as a virtual incarnation of the cinema. He told *Midi-Minuit*, "I am not a director with a personal style. I am simply cinema." And, apropos of *Peeping Tom*, he observed, "I felt very close to the hero, who is an 'absolute' director, someone who approaches life like a director, who is conscious of it and suffers from it. He is a technician of emotion." Mark Lewis chose to die as the final aesthetic expression of his obsession. I still remember how, watching an *Arena* portrait of Michael Powell, I was electrified to hear Powell, while discussing *The Red Shoes*, chide Melvyn Bragg for not taking seriously the idea of dying for art. Powell turned away from his quizzical host towards the camera and re-affirmed his wildly romantic belief that the true artist – the "absolute" director – must always be ready to die for art. He meant it.

'Peeping Tom' is on selected re-release

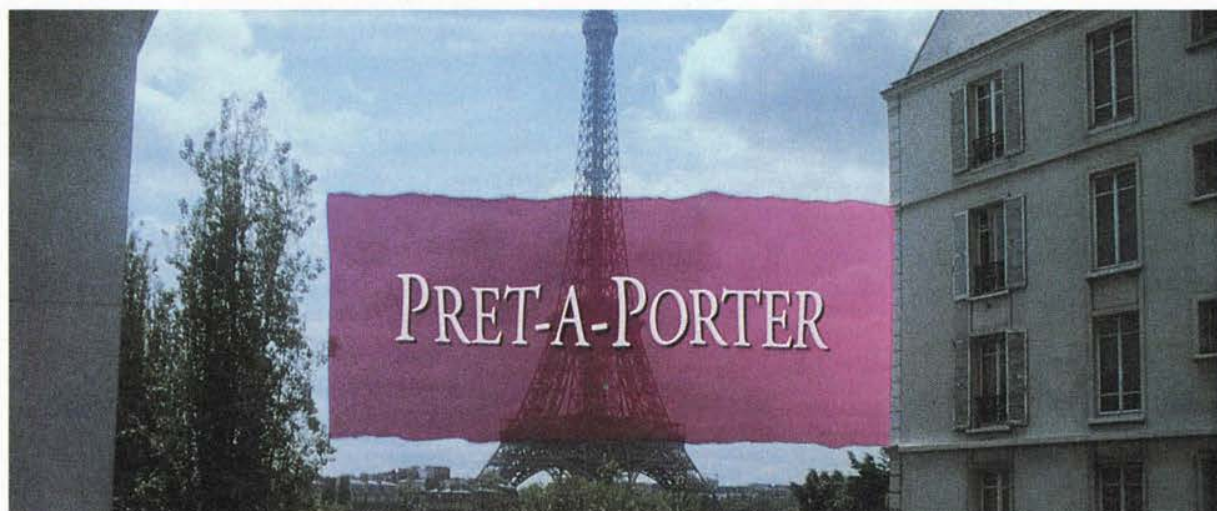


PRET-A-PORTER

B&E: We tried to present the credits for 'PRET-A-PORTER' in a way that alluded to the world of fashion design.

The actors' credits and the title appear to float upwards through the frame on diaphanous pieces of fabric. Some of the fabric edges are torn, others are cut with pinking shears.

We wanted to capture the ensemble nature of the acting by presenting the players' names as an unbroken group. We placed the main title after all the actors' credits because that was the moment that the film 'arrived' in Paris – the site of the Prêt-à-porter shows.



BEGINNINGS, ENDINGS AND THE STUFF IN BETWEEN

Titles and special effects designers Randy Balsmeyer and Mimi Everett talk with Janet Abrams

Randy Balsmeyer and Mimi Everett, purveyors of 'Beginnings, Endings and Stuff in between', produce titles and special effects for directors as diverse as Robert Altman, David Cronenberg, the Coen Brothers, Jim Jarmusch and Spike Lee from their loft studio on the edge of Manhattan's bustling photography district. "We were incorporated before we were married," says Everett, erupting into a peal of laughter, a characteristic which, she admits, can get her into trouble at screenings. She and the soft-spoken Balsmeyer finish each other's sentences and are clearly complementary talents.

Born in San Diego, Balsmeyer studied still photography and graphics at CalArts in Los Angeles then moved to Seattle, hoping to apply his design skills to something other than advertising or commercial art. After working on Expo '74, he joined the Seattle film lab Alpha Cine, which had just opened an effects department. There he met Everett, who had emigrated to Seattle from Tokyo at the age of four and "run back screaming" to the west coast to

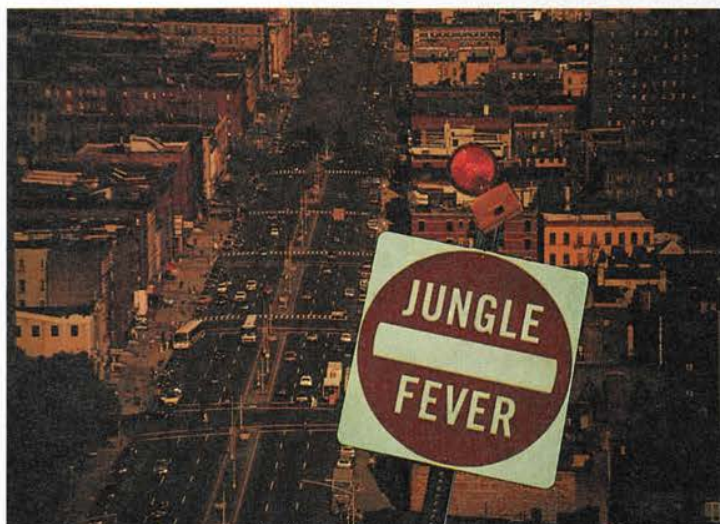
enrol at the University of Washington, Seattle, following a half semester at Sarah Lawrence. Taking advantage of the university medical school's well-equipped film unit, she gained gory but valuable experience hanging out at weekends in one of Seattle's major hospital casualty departments, capturing a catalogue of critical injuries on 16 mm for teaching purposes.

The pair moved to New York in 1980, where they joined the special effects and television commercials production house R/Greenberg, Balsmeyer working in direction, motion control and animation, Everett in opticals. But the mainstream commercial orientation of the company became increasingly frustrating. "It was a situation where you didn't get personal creative satisfaction. It was like an assembly line, and the end product showed it," says Balsmeyer. Hankering for more direct collaboration with the kind of directors whose movies they enjoyed, they founded Balsmeyer & Everett in 1986. "We were very careful not

to raid existing R/G clients. We pretty much walked away and started from scratch." Their client list today is an international roll call of interesting directors, with a strong emphasis on independents. But to begin with they made cold calls, sometimes with spectacular results.

"We went to see *She's Gotta Have It*, and afterwards I wrote to Spike and simply said, 'We'd love to work with you,'" recalls Everett. "Three days later he phoned me, and he's been our client ever since. It's the easiest thing in the world to tell someone you like their work if it's true." Balsmeyer notes, "The idea that we were interested in him as opposed to other film-makers – not just for the business but because of the kind of film he was making – said a lot to him." B&E have now done titles for six of Lee's features, and find that he and David Cronenberg are "in an odd way the most similar in that they give us the most freedom".

Lee shows them a film in progress and invites them to suggest ideas, though he often



JUNGLE FEVER

B&E: Ernest Dickerson shot it and our contribution was the manipulation of his cityscapes and the design and motion of the traffic signs. Spike wanted them to be the visual representation of what people in these neighbourhoods think: if you could see what goes on in their heads, on traffic signs, what would they say? Coming up with those slogans was pretty difficult. We try to be unbelievably PC, and these signs were the antithesis of PC.

They are virtually full scale: the city gave us a bunch of blanks, which we dirtied up and heavily 'weathered'. The signs were shot motion control on our stage: they are stationary, and the camera is moving around them. We did them all 'front light, back light': one pass in the camera with the lights on for beauty, then a white cyclorama was lit up behind the signs and we photographed their silhouettes. That's what created the matte so they could be put together optically

with the background scenes.

The background is pixillated: instead of just step-printing, it's got a little 'g-da, g-da' rhythm built into it that goes with the music. Something like: photograph the first frame, don't photograph the next three, and then catch the next. It's all done in the optical stage.

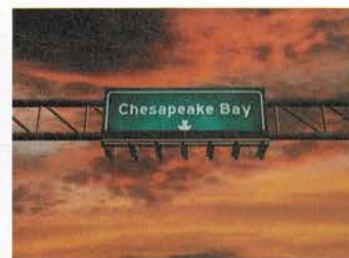
CROOKLYN

B&E: Spike had built props, put them out on a highway and shot them, but he wasn't happy with the shots: they are meant to be a little bit surreal because you're going into a surreal segment of the film. So he came to us and said, "Let's do something interesting." The knee-jerk reaction was to do what we'd done for 'Jungle Fever': make big props, put them on the stage. Then he called and said, "I need them in ten days for a screening." We budgeted it out and realised that we could do it faster, cheaper and better digitally. And with Spike saying, "Just tell me one thing: it's not gonna

look like video, is it?"

For everything a prop-maker could have done with a real sign, we found an equivalent in the computer—for instance, weathering, or the way metal would deteriorate. You want a rivet? You make one. For economy and efficiency, both signs are made of the same parts: the uprights and crossbars are the same model pieced together.

We took photographs of real freeway signs to give the animator something to work with in terms of detailing. But basically everything was modelled in the computer using Softimage, Illustrator for the layout of the lettering and Photoshop for all the textures. The clouds are one still photograph, which we mapped into the interior of a hemisphere modelled in computer space, so that as the camera moves and tilts up, you get something covering your head. It was Spike's decision not to see anything but sky and sign: he wanted no peripheral stuff at all. And it was his choice of sky.



has a strong feeling about the basic theme. "On *Jungle Fever*, for instance, he kept saying, 'I see signs,'" says Everett. The running joke is that whatever B&E come up with, it has to surprise him. "We say, 'yeah, we know... and it's also got to be something you've never seen before on film.' Mostly he means it, whereas a lot of other directors really want something familiar."

At the moment Balsmeyer and Everett are working with Lee on special effects for his latest film, *Clockers*, based on the Richard Price novel. "We began talking to Spike about titles for *Clockers* the day after the *Crooklyn* premiere. He doesn't skip a beat. There are about six flashback scenes and he wants them to have a very surreal, you could almost say 'solarised' look. They're trying all sorts of wild things, really unusual film stocks. We did a number of treatments, both optical and digital, to help them determine how much to manipulate on set and how much to leave for us to do afterwards. Certain effects are supposed to take place at night and we found that if there's a big area of

black in the frame, nothing happens. So it was a good lesson for the DP in how to frame and compose the shots."

Title sequences are like the overture to an opera, setting the overall tone of a film. They are often the director's last chance, after a film is cut, to use two minutes at the beginning to affect how the audience will view the rest. As Everett puts it, "Titles have to do with where you want the audience's heads to be at the start of the film. We can deliver them to that place so they will be most receptive to what they're about to see."

Balsmeyer adds, "Frequently you'll have comedies which aren't all that funny, but the phrase 'let the audience know it's OK to laugh' comes up." But the titles can also warn of darker stuff ahead, as in the case of David Cronenberg's *Dead Ringers*. "If you take the title sequence away from the movie, it becomes a different movie," affirms Cronenberg. "You're setting the film up, taking people from the street into the movie. It's like the Lamaze

birthing technique: you want to get the audience gently floating in warm water."

Cronenberg first wanted to contact B&E for *Dead Ringers* because he knew he would need motion control for the twinning sequences and hoped to avoid the cumbersome equipment used on *The Fly*. When he met them he was pleasantly surprised to discover that the same people who had developed "a very nifty device that uses bike chain instead of track for motion control" could also produce compelling titles.

The designers, meanwhile, had spotted a one-column-inch story in *Variety* announcing that Cronenberg had been signed to direct *Twins*, as the film was known before the Ivan Reitman film usurped the title. Deducing that such a subject might need motion control, they immediately embarked on a series of late-night phone calls to the director's regular production crew members, then on location all over the country, to try to secure an introduction to Cronenberg himself.

"David wanted to shoot the film as if he ►



M. BUTTERFLY

B&E: There's a scene in the film that spoke to us: the John Lone character is in a bedroom and keeps talking and peering out from behind a curtain – there are lots of layers within the movie. So the titles are being hidden or revealed to you, sliding out from behind other things. It's as if you're entering a little environment; each time you're getting deeper in.

The basic design could have been accomplished conventionally or digitally. But we decided to go digital, even though it was 20 per cent more expensive, because we could take it for granted that it would be dirt-free – dirt is the bane of the optical person's existence. It took 48 hours just to film-record the sequence from the computer.

An East Asian specialist seeing this film would probably be appalled because we're butting Japanese and Chinese imagery against each other. But it's deliberate: the main character is a diplomat who refers to his Chinese mistress

by a Japanese name – it's all the same to him. He has a very imperialistic attitude towards the east, and that ties into his relationship: he doesn't care what nationality she is. We were also trying to depict a certain class – Japan is incredibly class-conscious – and both cultures have very iconographic images.

The entire piece is computer generated: all the 3D objects are created using SoftImage modelling and animation program. The 2D surfaces are scanned in, then combined with the objects and artwork in EDDIE, a compositing program, which is where a 'cucoloris' is added: the effect of dappled lighting that makes everything in the background layers appear less flat. The titles are in a middle layer: they don't cast shadows and they're not affected by the cucoloris.

All the items we chose are highly symbolic: the Japanese dance fan; the Chinese 'good luck' character, often seen embroidered on Peking Opera costume hems, which

we decided to have carved in jade; the beaded flame ball; the Chinese moon gate. The kimono fabric is computer recreated to wave in the breeze, with a slow ripple across its surface.

The mask is modelled from one of hundreds of make-up patterns for the Peking Opera, which we found in an archive at Columbia University. We took one real ginkgo leaf from the parking lot of Barney's department store, scanned it, and applied a 'flocking' technique to get the swirl of leaves; the same treatment was applied to the flurry of Hana Fuda playing cards (a fifteenth-century Kyoto-era court game) elsewhere in the sequence.

There were certain strokes of luck: we contacted one collector in New York who said she'd love to help but she was leaving town that day for three months. So we went up there and came out two hours later with about \$30,000 worth of antique kimonos. If we hadn't called at that hour we'd have had a very different-looking title sequence.

◀ had two actors and they were both there. So he booked us for a couple of weeks, and if a twinning shot came up, we'd be ready to roll in a matter of minutes. Motion control is a computer and a bunch of electronics: the dolly and the camera head are special, and everything is motorised and remote controlled. The camera is operated live for the first half, then, having recorded its exact motion – bumps in the track and all – we would watch the combined performance on a video monitor as we shot the second half. Jeremy Irons has to walk down the dolly track, with one eye down because he's straddling a motorcycle chain, and simultaneously try to remember which twin he's being. There's always a stand-in in place of the other twin: eyelines are a problem in effects work if you don't have someone to look at."

The concept for the titles of *Dead Ringers* may have been Cronenberg's, but for him the process is analogous to composing music for a film. "You're not there to stamp your own personality on the film; you're there to infiltrate,

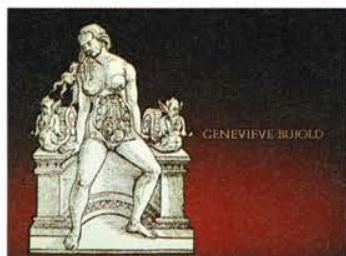
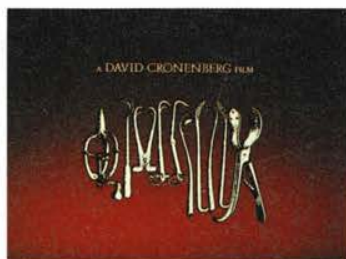
to infuse yourself into it in order to get the best out of the work. But you're no good if you have no personality of your own." As with his composers, he likes to get his titles designers involved at an early stage. "I send them the script, tell them who we're casting, and keep in touch because there may be something in terms of the shooting that will help them. Normally I wouldn't show them the film before a couple of cuts I was happy with. Then I have them come up with ideas for what the film needs, what will get the best response. Where they are in New York is like the film control centre of the universe: everybody ends up drifting through their place, so their responses are very valuable."

The designers often find that the best clues for a title sequence emerge from a discussion of something quite unrelated. "For instance with *Dead Ringers*, we had a lengthy conversation with David about the Middle Ages, and got a sense of mood from that," says Everett. They usually present a couple of alternative

approaches, in video clips if the sequence is computer generated, or as storyboards.

Titles and effects businesses, as Balsmeyer points out, are typically just service operations behind a counter. "You go in with your film and order 26 white titles and it's 'Can I have them on Tuesday?' There's a spectrum from pure designers to pure facilities, from people who have a drawing board at home to the places with all the machines that crank out sausages. We've defined a niche in the middle." B&E concentrate on offering specialised design and production skills, with a team of six full-time staff (including the partners) and sundry freelancers brought in as projects demand. "There are certain tools of the trade you have to have, or you aren't going to be able to create the thing you see in your head," says Balsmeyer. But the concept always comes first. "We try to divorce ourselves from technique when thinking about what we want to see. Otherwise it's the tail wagging the dog: you'd be saying 'Oh no, that's too hard to do.'" Adds Everett, "There's a lot of 'who





DEAD RINGERS

David Cronenberg: I had all these books of surgical instruments, which become strange art objects when they're no longer in use. Then Randy and Mimi did research in all kinds of obscure places and came up with the most wonderful images: the engravings and woodcuts of pregnant women with twins were their addition. **B&E:** If you were to see the film without the titles, then when it gets creepy it would throw you. The titles are a warning to watch your back, to be prepared for something more than these little boys playing.

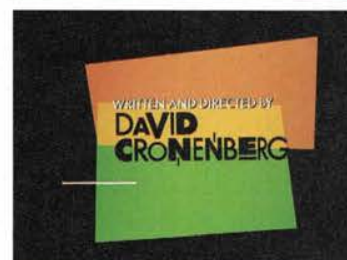
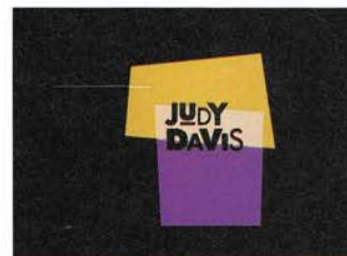
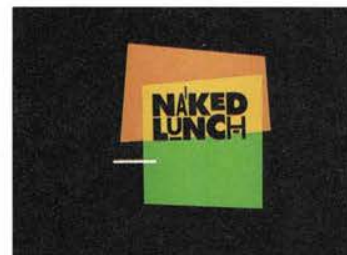
NAKED LUNCH

David Cronenberg: We toyed with using a New York skyline, but Burroughs is not a New York kind of person. We were really thinking about the time slip, the mid-to-late 50s, early 60s. So we looked at Saul Bass-type credits, and also at Grove Press books, which published Burroughs, Kerouac and Ginsberg. We wanted the

movie version of what the books of the time would have looked like.

B&E: David originally wanted to see the coloured panels solid, opaque, and moving against each other, with no third colour where they intersect. So we did it that way, and then said, "You really don't want to do this." And he said, "You're right."

Technically, it's incredibly simple and totally mechanical. The type went out as kodoliths: all variations on Futura – we probably couldn't have done this piece without a Macintosh. Those sheets of clear film with black lettering are placed in front of the camera. Then the overlapping irregular shapes are cut out of black cardboard, with a coloured gel inside, back lit, and done as multiple exposures. For instance, you shoot only the green first, then you wind the film back, set up the orange one and shoot that. We had to test a million coloured gels to see which ones produce that cool colour when they overlap. So this effect never happened in real life; only on film.



got us into this?' as we try to figure out how to do something."

As with many other disciplines, titles design is on a technological cusp thanks to the computer. "We're right in transition between what people call photomechanicals and digital effects," explains Balsmeyer. "I think we'll rapidly see the latter taking over. Every time a project comes in you have to think about it in terms of the tools that are available this week." B&E invested in Silicon Graphics Indigo II workstations in mid-1993 and produced their first fully computer-generated titles sequence last autumn, for Cronenberg's *M. Butterfly*. They have also employed the new computer technology in effects for *The Hudsucker Proxy*, *Crooklyn* and a new opening for the children's television programme *Sesame Street*.

They are now working on titles for Robert Altman's farce *PRET-A-PORTE*, having provided opening credits for *Short Cuts* which the director describes as "the best I've had." For *PRET-A-PORTE*, "The problem is of putting 20 to 30

names up front and trying not to give them any order," says Altman. "I don't like alphabetical billing. But it's very important to me that the audience, and primarily the actors, should not consider anybody more important than anybody else." With a cast list that includes Sophia Loren, Tim Robbins, Kim Basinger, Julia Roberts and Lauren Bacall, this is quite a challenge.

For *Short Cuts* the solution was to have the names drift continuously into the frame, each moving at a different speed and in a different direction, eventually dissolving in a fading fireworks shimmer over the night-time scene of crop-dusting helicopters. "It's all about motion and flicker effect," says Balsmeyer. "We wanted to give the feeling that the titles were flying with the helicopters. It was something about the spraying and the sound of the blades."

"Some titles designers do sequences that are so flashy they get out of balance with the rest of the film," comments Altman. "But I trust Randy and Mimi: they understand what a title sequence is supposed to do. It's about giving

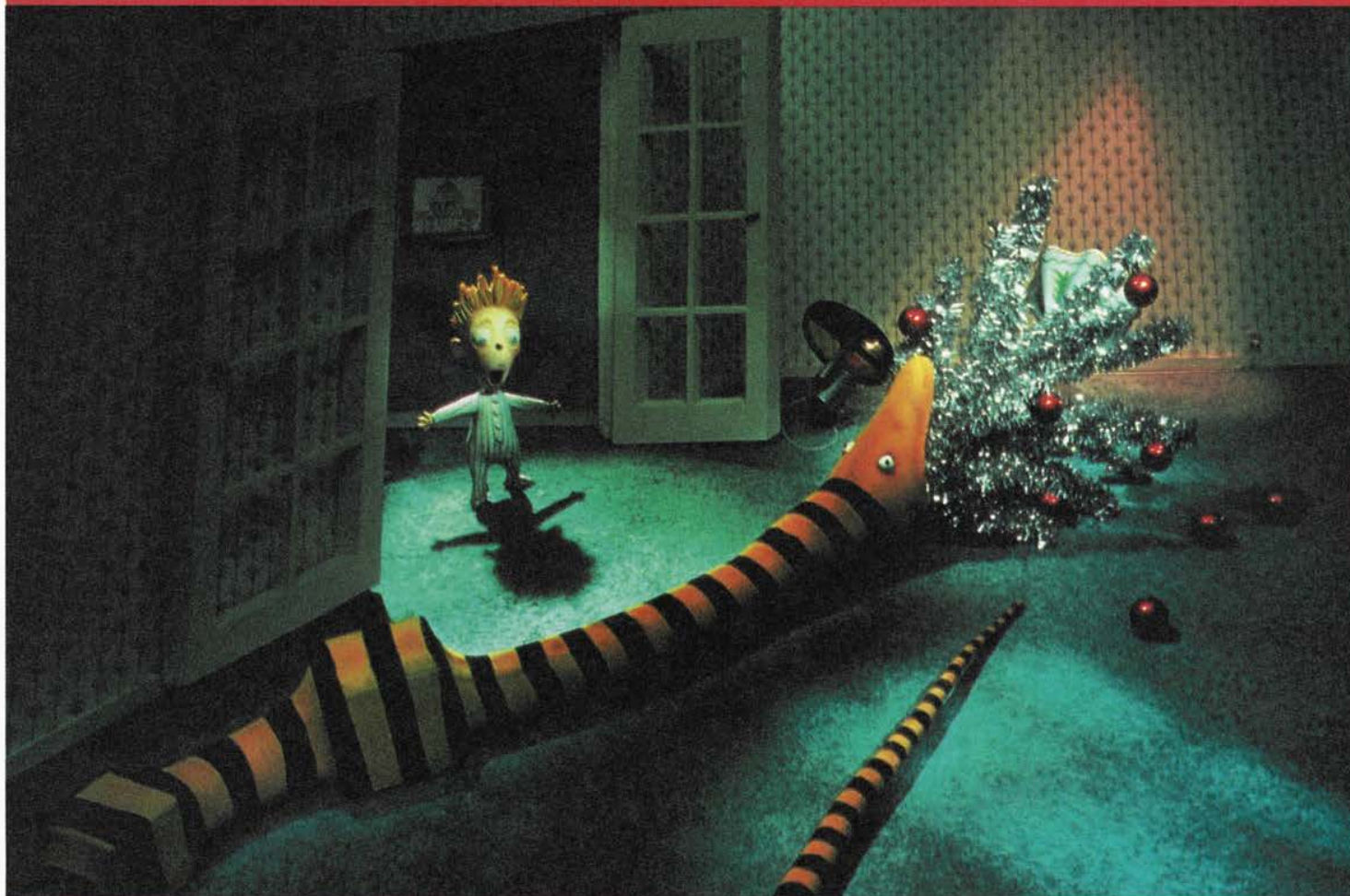
hard information – who is in this film – without interrupting the narrative that has already started, which has a certain force." As far as the working process goes, Altman says: "I let them make their decisions and if I see something that doesn't strike me, I say, 'Can you show me something else?'" On *PRET-A-PORTE*, however, the first typeface presented met with the director's approval (the first two title cards will be in Cyrillic lettering). "They're very easy to communicate with and they always take things a step further. I wouldn't think of going to anybody else unless they said, 'We don't want to work for you any more.'"

Adds Cronenberg: "Their sequences come out of a real, sensitive, delicate understanding of the films, and they seem to have so many tricks up their sleeves. The combined sleeve is pretty big, almost Mandarin. There's a lot of self-directed cynicism, yet they come up with really gorgeous work."

'Crooklyn' is reviewed on page 44. *'PRET-A-PORTE'* is due for release in the UK in March 1995



The king of Halloweentown: Jack Skellington, dressed as Father Christmas, in a town where the strange is commonplace, above. A less than kindly present: the destructive Christmas snake, below



Henry Selick, the unsung director of 'The Nightmare Before Christmas', talks with Leslie Felperin

ANIMATED DREAMS

As far as the general public is concerned, animation directors barely exist, while producers get all the glory – for instance, everyone assumed for years that Walt Disney was solely responsible for the studio's string of hits. Today, independent animation directors may be recognised as auteurs, but within the Hollywood mainstream, directors are still seen as only a few steps up the food chain from inkers and painters.

In keeping with this tradition, Disney is marketing its latest feature as 'Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas*'. But though the film is based on a poem and treatment Burton wrote while employed at Disney in the early 80s (and therefore is still under the studio's copyright control), it was shaped as much by the interpretation of its director, Henry Selick, as 'Apocalypse Now' was by Coppola's reading of 'Heart of Darkness'. It was Selick who put flesh on Burton's original, literally, skeletal concept.

Skinnier than Kate Moss, the hero of 'The Nightmare Before Christmas', Jack Skellington, is the king of Halloweentown, populated by a freakish cast that could have made Tod Browning shudder. Stumbling across Christmastown by accident, Jack decides to try his hand at a different kind of holiday. Halloweentown swings into action, making teddy bears with teeth and other ghoulish Christmas presents, and arranges for Kris Kringle to be Santa-napped. All goes predictably wrong as the presents produce tears instead of joy and Santa falls into the hands of malevolent gambling-man Oogie Boogie. Assisted by his fetching rag-doll girlfriend Sally and his ghost dog Zero (a gem-nosed scene-stealer), Jack tries to set things right.

Strongly evocative, in the familiar dark nightshades of Burton's visual signature, the film marks a departure for Disney. Apart from the disastrous experiment in the macabre of 'The Black Cauldron' (1985), the studio hasn't made anything as creepily sinister as this since Pinocchio visited Pleasure Island and turned into a donkey. Moreover, the use of

stop-motion or three-dimensional animation has traditionally been the province of cheap children's television or of avant-gardists like Jan Svankmajer and the Brothers Quay.

After establishing a studio in San Francisco, Selick was given the difficult brief of trying to remain true to Burton's original murky concept while keeping the film anodyne enough for the 'suits' at co-financiers Disney. The result is a film often visually spectacular but not as crisply structured as it could be. For instance, the climax, when the children in the beautifully skewed 'real world' open their presents, is genuinely hilarious, but over far too quickly. Nor do regular Burton collaborator Danny Elfman's lugubrious songs help, often reminiscent of Kurt Weill on a bad cocktail of Mogadon and Prozac. Nonetheless, after a slow start the film eventually took a respectable \$60 million in the US.

Modest and professionally circumspect, Selick is pragmatic about being eclipsed by his star producer. After all, they have been friends since they served their apprenticeship together at Disney in the early 80s. Like Burton, Selick started his animation career at CalArts in Jules Engel's experimental animation programme. His early films – for instance – 'Phases' (1978) and 'Seepage' (1981), with their mix of techniques and tendency towards abstraction, bear witness to this training.

After leaving Disney in disgust at having had to draw one too many "cute foxes", Selick moonlighted doing short animated films for MTV and 'Sesame Street' together with some second-unit directing and storyboarding for live-action films. In 1989 he made 'Slow Bob in the Lower Dimensions', a powerful mixture of pixilation and animation for MTV, as technically flawless as it is narratively obscure, which returned him to a full-time career in animation. Selick has a remarkable eye for imagery, and is gifted with an impressive command of the medium coupled with a perfectionist streak. If his next project, 'James and the Giant Peach', is successful, he may finally break out of the anonymity ghetto.

Leslie Felperin: How much of your training with Jules Engel in experimental animation filters into your current work as a mainstream director?

Henry Selick: I'm on the fence here. I'm definitely working in commercial films – the budgets are high enough to mean that I have to respect the fact that we want the films to pay for themselves so we can make more – but the audience is more open than Hollywood imagines. So I'm always trying to put in more than an audience can handle: new imagery, new techniques, even pushing novel storylines. The commercial rule for me is, the stranger the imagery, the straighter the story. You can't bend it too much. In my own films, I've often used very realistic images and very disjointed storylines because I'm more interested in tone poems than in tight little stories. But in the films I'm doing now I like to have understandable stories so I can go further on the visual side. **Are you pleased with 'The Nightmare Before Christmas'?**

The flaws are still painful, but what's good about it is excellent. I had an amazing group of people to work with including some fine

British animators – Paul Berry, whose *The Sandman* was nominated for an Academy award, and Loyd Price, among others. It was very gratifying not to have the typical Disney structure. Instead, there was Tim Burton – an 800-pound gorilla with creative control – who basically passed that creative control to me for most of the project while he was off making *Batman Returns* and *Ed Wood*. Tim is that lone filmmaker who does very unusual films, every one of which has been successful. Even with their story flaws and rhythm flaws, what's good in his films is so brilliant that the audience always responds.

The film has been marketed as 'Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas', but you're the director. What do you think is distinctively yours about the film?

It's as though he laid the egg, but I sat on it and hatched it, so it came out looking a bit like both of us. He wasn't involved in a hands-on way, but his hand is in it. It was my job in a way to make it look like a 'Tim Burton film', which is not so different from my own films. We can collaborate because we often think of the

same solution to a problem. It's why we hit it off at Disney – we were not having fun drawing cute foxes and little animals. But I would wager that in *A Nightmare Before Christmas* most of the lines you laugh at are mine. I did most sequences like the battle, or any action sequences – Tim always gives live action to a second-unit director. Every shot of the movie is something I looked at through a camera and composed.

I don't want to take away from Tim, but he was not here in San Francisco when we made it. He came up five times over two years, and spent no more than eight or ten days here in total. It's more like he wrote a children's book and gave it to us and we went from there. But the bottom line was that Tim Burton's name before the title was going to bring in more people than mine would. **'Nightmare' centres on three different worlds: those of Halloweentown, Christmastown and the 'real world'. You have the same contrast of worlds in one of your earlier films, 'Slow Bob in the Lower Dimensions'. Is this a concern of yours?**

It's pure coincidence – in fact, the idea of different holiday worlds came from Tim. But most of



What is it about this home that makes it so different?: the 'real' Santa Claus in 'The Nightmare Before Christmas', above. From 'Betty Boop' to 'Nightmare': the malevolent Oogie Boogie, below



◀ my other personal work, including several short films, is about the collision of worlds. For example, a 9-minute film I made in 1981, *Seepage*, depicts stop-motion animated life-size figures by a pool who experience a collision between their world and an imaginary world they speak of.

What kind of visual influences went into the design of 'Nightmare Before Christmas' apart from Tim Burton's original drawings? Did you draw on the gothic tradition for ways of expressing nightmarishness?

I drew on some of my favourite films, including *The Night of the Hunter*, the only Hollywood feature Charles Laughton directed. It was a low-budget film but it had a lot of high-contrast imagery, a fairy-tale quality. Then there were illustrators who were Tim's inspirations, including Edward Gorey and Charles Addams. We tried to put a lot of Gorey-type textures on our sets.

That sort of knobbly quality...

Yes, though the set for Christmastown was more Dr Seuss inspired, much softer, rounder, a fluffy look.

Were you inspired by any earlier artists?

Rick Heinrichs was the visual consultant on the film – he has worked with Tim on every film Tim has made, he's Tim's hidden partner. He exposed us to a Russian animator, one of the earliest... Starevich. We looked at Starevich's films not so much for style but because he would use real material, real cloth, hair, insects, things that shudder and shake and pixilate and catch your attention needlessly that most animators would avoid. It loosened us up a little.

Anyone else?

There are a lot of painters I've been affected by – for instance Francis Bacon, and some of Kandinsky's work before he went abstract. He would do these Russian fables, quite beautiful, fairytale paintings, very simple with colour on what he wants, light on what he wants, then the rest just disappears into a medium ground. Also the Polish animator and poster designer Jan Lenica crept in.

I know that Caroline Thompson wrote the script, but you must have had a big influence on it.

There are very few final lines of dialogue in the movie that are Caroline's. We worked with her, but she's off on other films and we were constantly rewriting, reconfiguring, developing the

film visually. I'd like to do a silent movie, quite honestly, because especially in stop-motion I think the characters could tell the story quite well without any dialogue.

To return to nightmares and the gothic, do you think animation is especially good at expressing these?

I think animation lends itself to illustrating dreams of any sort. As a kid I was deeply impressed by the 'Night on the Bare Mountain' sequence from *Fantasia*. That felt like nightmare and dreams to me, and was very powerful. Another important influence was Lotte Reiniger. I saw a lot of her films as a kid on a local television station. All her films are primarily silhouettes. They are very dreamlike, you have to use a lot of imagination to make them work. These two influences plugged into a kind of dream imagery where you don't fill in all the blanks, just as you'll get isolated figures in limbo in dreams, moving at unnatural speeds, usually in slow motion but sometimes faster, falling, exaggeration.

How did that feed into the design of the nightmare landscape in the film?

One of our criteria was to make the Halloween characters look really scary, though they weren't bad people except for Oogie Boogie, and even with him it was just his nature to be voracious. When Tim was a kid he watched a lot of films like the original *Frankenstein* or *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. Those creatures weren't inherently bad, they were just misunderstood and people were terrified of them and tried to destroy them. Tim had sympathy for them and it's something he wanted to carry through to the denizens of Halloweentown.

One thing that has caused controversy is that Oogie Boogie, the only malevolent character, has an "obviously" black voice attached to him. How do you respond to this criticism?

We did consider this. In some parts of the world, like in Alabama where my mother is from, a 'boogie man' is a monstrous black person, so it had racial connotations. It really came from Betty Boop cartoons though, which would have Cab Calloway, the jazz band leader and a great singer, serve as the basis of what they would call "specialty numbers". He would dance his inimitable jazz dance and sing 'Minnie the Moocher' or 'Old Man of the Mountain', and they would rotoscope, trace him, turn him

When Tim was a kid he watched a lot of films like the original 'Frankenstein' or 'The Creature from the Black Lagoon'

into a cartoon character, often transforming him into an animal, like a walrus. I think those are some of the most inventive moments in cartoon history, in no way racist, even though he was sometimes a villain.

It's not completely resolved in myself – it's controversial and I've got a slight twinge of guilt. But in the end we went with Ken Page, who is a black singer, because he was the best guy to sing the song. He had no problem with it.

There has been a lot of publicity about animation experiencing a renaissance, with Disney leading the way. Do you think that's the case?

It really is happening. This is the golden age of animation – it wasn't 1939-41. There's far more production going on, there are more independent animators, though it's not easy for everyone. Disney wants to do everything in-house and to gobble up the rest of the world. They want to own anyone who is doing great animation. I think they have a deal with the Aardman Studio. I hope they leave them alone and let them do what they do so well, though I wouldn't trust them to do so. They are also doing a film with Pixar, which is a company that does computer films with John Lasseter. They've been very hard on them, insisting on making things very obvious and working them over and over. They're doing incredibly well with this semi-formulaic approach to film-making, trying to reach the largest audience.

For independents it's still very tough. There's no equivalent in the US of Channel 4 or the BBC for funding and showing short films. There's MTV, which will pay a little bit of money for short pieces – that's what got my own career back on track. All kinds of techniques are being used – ancient ones like the ones we use combined with computer, pure computer, independents using wire, sand, and so on. It's a good time but it's not easy, and it never will be unless you want to do Disney animation and that's who you work for.

Did you break new ground technically with 'Nightmare'?

We took an old technique and did

the highest-quality stop-motion that has ever been done for that many minutes. I think we moved stop-motion up to a high level of performance in timing, lighting and computer-aided camera moves. We made it a serious contender rather than things that look like toys on a table top with two glaring lights.

What are you working on now?

A Roald Dahl children's book called *James and the Giant Peach*, for Skellington Productions, a company I set up for the last one. We're casting the part of James at the moment. The Disney people didn't get it at first, it's not their type of film, but then neither was *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. It's going to start live and then everything turns into stop-motion. Then the boy emerges, live again in New York, a drearier New York, flatter than he expected. Then there will be a combination of animation of the giant bugs who live in the peach emerging and interacting with the live world.

It sounds a little like Jan Svankmajer's features 'Alice' and 'Faust'. There's a European Surrealist sensibility in both Svankmajer and Dahl that seems related to the visual tone of 'Nightmare'.

When I went to work at Disney you had to do tests to get a job, and everyone would say, "That's kind of European". They didn't mean it as a compliment. There's that strong puppet tradition in eastern Europe, which was an influence on me. And I love Svankmajer's *Alice* – I'd like to see everything the guy has done.

The live world James starts to live in should be very stilted and lifeless. It will look like sets, like theatre work, and when James enters the peach, he transforms into a puppet. It's almost as though the live world is flatter. There was a book written around the turn of the century called *Flatlanders* that I read as a kid and it has stuck with me. I've always loved moving from dimension to dimension – when we go into the animated world things will just fall away into a more rich dimensional world, more alive than the live world.

Svankmajer's 'Faust' has just opened in London and there have already been articles comparing it to 'Nightmare'.

Sure, sure. Of course, he's the pure artist and we're the Hollywood schlockmeisters, right?

'Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas' opens on 25 November and is reviewed on page 53 of this issue



THE LANGUAGE OF STRAWBERRY

Shot in Havana by acclaimed Cuban director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 'Strawberry and Chocolate' is the most popular Cuban film for many years. It is also the first film to focus on Cuban homosexuality. But is it any good? And can bourgeois melodrama deal with gay experience? By Paul Julian Smith

When Fidel Castro visited Spain a few years back, he shared a platform with Manuel Fraga, currently president of the autonomous region of Galicia and the only politician still around who held office under the Francoist dictatorship. Fidel and Fraga – their handshake suggested a multitude of ironies: of the meeting of extremes of left and right; of the immobility of dictatorships, whatever their political stripe; of the long autumn of patriarchs as the once youthful Cuban revolution entered its fourth decade. These ironies are also apparent in *Strawberry and Chocolate* (*Fresa y chocolate*), the first film to focus on Cuban homosexuality and the most popular movie to come out of the island (albeit with funding from Spain and Mexico) for many years. In *Strawberry and Chocolate* too we find a curious temporal suspension – the film is apparently set in the worst years of anti-gay repression of the 70s, but shot in the picturesque dereliction of contemporary Old Havana – together with the taming of a once vital revolutionary cinema, reduced here to discreet and wordy bourgeois melodrama.

But why is it that *Strawberry and Chocolate* has become the movie of the moment, festooned with awards from Havana to Berlin and praised by critics from Madrid to New York? How does the film relate to the history of homosexuality in Cuba and to a Cuban culture queerer perhaps than most English-speakers realise? And why is the question of homosexuality such a “problem” (to use director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea’s word) for the revolution, one which it can bring itself to address only now, *in extremis*? The problem with *Strawberry and Chocolate* is not only one of representation, of the pallid and patronising images of gay men it purveys; it is also one of form, of the failure to problematise the cinematic apparatus as Alea did to such brilliant effect in 60s films such as *Memories of Underdevelopment* (*Memorias del subdesarrollo*).

Perils of queer friendship

Jorge Perugorria, who plays the swishy queen Diego, has been at pains to point out in interviews that he is not himself gay, fearing that naive Cuban audiences might identify him with his character. While this is no tribute to a revolutionary cinema which has spent 35 years trying to make its domestic audience cinematically literate, there can be few gay men (let alone straight) who would wish to identify with Diego. The first reason is his effeminacy. Clearly it is legitimate (not to mention fun) for

First World queers to vindicate drag and camp in a context where diverse images of homosexuality are available to us; for Cubans, for whom this is the first gay starring role they have seen, the choice of a *loca* or queen bears a burden of representation it would not elsewhere.

Certainly when I first saw *Strawberry and Chocolate* at an informal screening of a pirate video in New York, the mainly Cuban exile, mainly straight audience found almost every one of Diego’s lines, however pathetic, hysterically funny. His plight did not provoke the sympathy Alea professes to intend. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has suggested, the word ‘queer’ should be used only in the first person; when queenery is foisted on a character by a straight actor and director, the effect is very different. Moreover, by branding the queen at its centre a racist and a snob, *Strawberry and Chocolate* professes to be even-handed or balanced: “Look,” it proclaims, “even the victims of oppression can be oppressive too.” This is a false symmetry. When the deck is stacked so overwhelmingly against one partner (when gays have been invisible in Cuban cinema for so long), any such “balance” serves only as ostentatious negation, an attempt to wish away the massive repression that has taken place.

Strawberry and Chocolate’s strategy is thus one of disavowal. Senel Paz, screenwriter and author of the short story from which the film has been adapted, has claimed in classic liberal-humanist style that the work is about tolerance in general, not homosexuality in particular. It is a party line followed by Alea and the film’s defenders in Cuba. One of the latter wrote, unselfconsciously, that Diego is a “homosexual who rather than thinking of himself as such, prides himself on being a human being and a Cuban” – as if homosexuality and humanity or Cubanness are mutually exclusive. It is for this reason that Paz and Alea introduce into the film an emphasis on heterosexual female characters absent in the original story. In moments of transparent homosexual panic, demonstrations of sexless and self-sacrificing gay love are interspersed with more explicit straight sex scenes: the film begins with a frustrated attempt by po-faced party activist David (cute Vladimir Cruz) to bed the fiancée who is to desert him and ends with his ‘successful’ initiation into adult heterosexuality by older woman Nancy (played by veteran actor and wife of Alea, Mirta Ibarra).

Not only, then, does the film carefully frame the gay action within a hetero narrative which

safely contains it for nervous straights, it also displaces, in classic misogynist fashion, the homophobic contempt for the supposed femininity of gay men on to a woman. Sentimental, suicidal, active in black marketeering and *santería* (popular Afro-Cuban religion), Nancy consoles straight viewers threatened by male homosexuality by redirecting hysteria to its ‘proper’ place (the woman’s body), just as she distracts David from the perils of queer friendship through the offer of redemptive, hetero coitus. It is a triangle reminiscent of British films of the 60s or Spanish ones of the 70s, in which homosexuality serves as an alibi for or an obstacle to the successful conclusion of heterosexual relations. The main question raised by the conclusion of *Strawberry and Chocolate*, in which David’s problems are resolved by screwing Nancy in Diego’s bed, is whether it is more insulting to women or to gay men.

Appetite for self-sacrifice

In *Strawberry and Chocolate* (as in *A Taste of Honey* or *The Leather Boys*), what cannot be represented, what can under no circumstances be allowed to appear, is the relationship between gay men. The only substantial scene between David and a camp companion is a cat fight which ends, of course, in tears. The moral is that without a straight man to keep things in line, queers cause chaos. Ironically, the sexiest scene is when a drunken David is consoled by his holier-than-thou homophobic room-mate, and the two straight men grapple in their underpants. But the impossibly chaste Diego is denied even this consolation and is constantly apologising for the pathetic service he requests: a sexless hug from the idolised David. Even on second viewing, I kept hoping Diego would punch David out when he smugly reveals he has had sex with a woman in Diego’s bed. But mutely surrendering his love to another, Diego’s appetite for self-sacrifice beats even Bette Davis in *Old Acquaintance*, where she gives up her young fiancé to her best friend’s daughter.

The reference to melodrama is not casual. *Strawberry and Chocolate* is a stagy film, very much a talking (not a moving) picture. The *mise en scène* is picturesque, with Old Havana looking elegantly decayed rather than simply slummy, and the camerawork and editing are unobtrusive. While such seamlessness might be credited to co-director Juan Carlos Tabío (best known for the toothless satire on bureaucracy *Plaff! or Too Afraid of Life*), it is wholly inimical to the revolutionary project of film-making ►

Homo and hetero worlds:
Diego, the gay Cuban, with David in ‘Strawberry and Chocolate’, opposite; David the activist with the older woman Nancy, left



◀ with which Alea was once so identified. Here, the supposed ideological rupture with the past carried out by the revolution (the *desgarramiento*) gave rise to a filmic language which prized visual discontinuity and the disruption of naturalistic illusion. The crisis of individualism dramatised in films such as *Memories of Underdevelopment* was both a social and a cinematic process (or so the theory went), with the class critique of the bourgeoisie re-enacted in a dynamic fashion in the filmic critique of classic Hollywood realism. The visual innovations of *Memories*, with its constant shifts from hand-held to tripod camera and from synthetic to analytic editing and its play with voiceover and point of view, were fused with its theme: the shifting and unstable position of a middle-class, property-owning sympathiser with the revolution. With hindsight, *Memories* looks queerer by far than *Strawberry and Chocolate*: the famous scene in which anti-hero Sergio tries on his absent wife's furs and jewels before pulling her stocking over his face says more about the politics of sexual ambiguity than all Diego and David's self-conscious debates. It is a further irony that a director as theoretically sophisticated as Alea should have failed even to consider the possibility, so familiar to proponents and consumers of queer cinema, that bourgeois realism is not an appropriate medium for lesbian and gay concerns, that the cinematic apparatus itself must be interrogated if we are to emerge into visibility.

Sex is like ice-cream

Strawberry and Chocolate, then, is wholly reliant on that old bogeyman of critical theory (and most particularly of Marxist critical theory): universalism. Its moral, as banal as it is unconvincing, is that people are all the same and that sex is like ice-cream, simply a matter of taste. It is therefore impossible, within the terms of the film, to examine why 'people who preferred strawberry' were sent to forced labour camps while 'people who preferred chocolate' were not. If, as Diego claims, someone must take responsibility for the UMAPs (Military Units for the Aid of Production) in which gay men, among others, were exploited as slave labour, then the film offers no suggestion as to who might be to blame.

While the *New York Times* claimed in a rave review that *Strawberry and Chocolate* is "a flirtation across the borders of Cuban ideology", the Spanish gay press came closer when it noted that the film is "not against the revolution, but

rather within it". What the film offers gay Cubans is not the chance to rethink the unholy alliance between homophobia and Fidelismo, but to reframe that alliance by incorporating a sexless and self-sacrificing homosexuality into a regime that has committed horrific crimes against lesbians and gay men, crimes which remain unpunished. Indeed, the cinematography unthinkingly and definitively excludes the gay character towards whom the script directs such sympathy: the camera consistently adopts straight David's point of view as his gaze roams over the flamboyant Diego, desirable women, or the ruins of Old Havana, taking possession of each with heterosexual insouciance. There is no confusion as to who is the character with whom we are to identify. On the one occasion when we are permitted to see from Diego's perspective, as the camera pans slowly over David's naked torso, Alea has Diego rush to cover the vulnerable drunken revolutionary with a blanket, anxious to remove this pleasurable spectacle from unreliable queer eyes.

Alea, it should be said, has not been known as a friend of Cuban queens. Although he and Mirta Ibarra have recently denounced the UMAP camps and the expulsion of lesbian and gay artists from the professions, it is easier to do this in the 90s than it was in the 60s and 70s when the worst repression took place. Alea claimed in a recent interview that the late Cuban exile cinematographer Néstor Almendros is the "special person" to whom the film is directed. But when Almendros' documentary on the Castroist repression of queers was released in 1984, Alea vigorously denounced Almendros, publishing a declamatory piece entitled 'Cuba, sí; Almendros, no' in the *Village Voice*. (Ten years later, the *Voice*'s J. Hoberman is the one reviewer I know to have criticised *Strawberry and Chocolate*.) Alea's allegation in the Spanish press that exiled actor Andy Garcia and writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante had written to the Motion Picture Association of America requesting that *Strawberry and Chocolate* be banned in the US also failed to reflect well on him, when Garcia and Cabrera Infante challenged him to produce this alleged letter.

But if Alea, the director most associated with revolutionary policy and with the monopoly film institute ICAIC, is an unlikely champion of gays, and if he and other Cubans constantly propose Latin American machismo as an alibi for revolutionary repression, then Cuban culture is nonetheless queerer than many English-speakers might suspect. From the *fin de siècle*

decadent poet Julián del Casal to more recent figures such as Baroque novelist José Lezama Lima and dramatist Virgilio Piñera (both shamefully tormented by the regime, both cited in *Strawberry and Chocolate*), Cuba has a queer literary canon which is not only sexually explicit on occasion, but also vigorously experimental in form. Reinaldo Arenas' *Before Nightfall* (recently published in English) not only gives eloquent testimony to his experience as a political prisoner in Havana's Morro prison but also manifests a shameless delight in gay sex with the most diverse partners and in the most unlikely circumstances: in buses and on trains; with party workers and raw recruits; even underwater at the beach, equipped with a snorkel and flippers. It is a pity that Alea's dour Diego is not allowed even a glimmer of Arenas' defiantly proud eroticism. And to argue that we should not expect too much from the first film with a gay theme from Castro's Cuba is to be ignorant of the history of Spanish-speaking cinema: there are a number of tragic queens in Latin American cinema while from the depths of Franco's censorship emerged Luis María Delgado's pleasurable gay-themed musical comedy *Diferente*. And this in 1961, not 1993. Had Paz and Alea kept in mind such precedents, they might have produced a very different film.

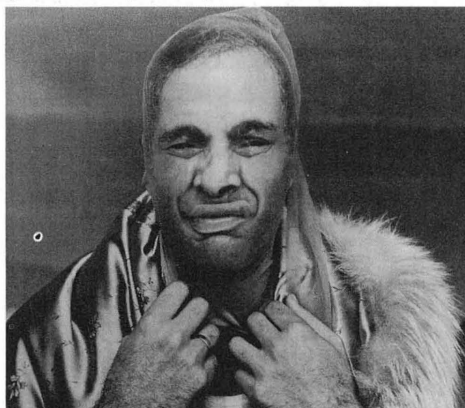
Remapping of desire

A novel by Arenas set in the UMAP labour camps raises fascinating and disturbing questions undreamed of by *Strawberry and Chocolate*. Arturo, la estrella más brillante (*Arthur: The Brightest Star*) tells the story of a straight-acting gay man victimised in the labour camps as much by malicious queens as by brutal guards. And it does not shy away from the notion of desire between torturer and victim: the brutalised prisoner takes pride in the pleasure he gives the sadistic male guard whom he sexually services. Throughout his work, Arenas argues that the distinction between homo and hetero does not hold for Cuba, where there are only queens (*locas*) and 'real men', who may penetrate queens or women indifferently, a remapping of desire as insertive or receptive rather than hetero or homo (as practice, not identity) that holds lessons for us all. Alea's film merely reiterates the binary of straight and gay which the lived experience of many Latin Americans would call into question.

Critics have compared *Strawberry and Chocolate* to Manuel Puig's novel filmed by Hector Babenco, *The Kiss of the Spider Woman*, in which a

Images of innovation:

Alea's 'Memories of Underdevelopment' (1968), a film more queer than his recent 'Strawberry and Chocolate'



camp gay man and a humourless revolutionary also confront one another at length. The difference is that in Puig the two men physically fuck and psychically merge: the gay man becomes politicised and the straight man feminised, each transformed by sex with the other. *Strawberry and Chocolate*, pleasure-phobic as it is, could never consider such a conclusion. And here we come to the root of the Cuban revolution's continuing horror of homosexuality. The motto of the UMAP camps was "Work Will Make You Men". And Castroism has been marked not only by the cult of Stakhanovite heroism but by a pointless pursuit of labour for its own sake, from the self-imposition of sugarcane harvest targets which proved impossible to meet to the current *folie de grandeur*: a massive tunnel system in which the revolutionaries can hide in the event of a US invasion. In *Memoirs* it is the bourgeois idleness of Sergio that scandalises party snoopers; in *Strawberry and Chocolate* it is the unproductivity of the tea-sipping Diego which arouses the ire of the authorities. Homophobia in Cuba is thus associated not, as in other countries, with religious dogma or pseudo-scientific degeneration theory. Rather it is structurally linked to the centrality of the value of labour to Marxist doctrine and practice. Alea himself, in another era of more experimental film-making, stressed the "active labour" of the new film spectator, no longer allowed passively to consume the more simply pleasurable products of Hollywood. In a state which attempted to render every inch of land productive by planting coffee bushes even in soil which could not support them, the scandal of homosexuality is its supposed sterility, its stubborn unwillingness to (re)produce. It is this puritan contempt for queer pleasure that *Strawberry and Chocolate* so continues, even as it claims to be a definitive break with the terror of the past.

Hence *Strawberry and Chocolate* is the perfect film for what the *New Republic* (once a faithful supporter) has called Fidel's long, long goodbye. As an exhausted economy prostitutes itself for dollar tourism and lays on a thriving sex trade for visiting Europeans, as rafters invert the old slogan and choose death rather than socialism, Alea and Tabío offer us a film as meretricious and mendacious as Castro's current policies: heavy-handed, disingenuous, and irredeemably bourgeois. As J. Hoberman has prophesied, it will make a mint.

'Strawberry and Chocolate' opens on 18 November and is reviewed on page 48 of this issue

Senel Paz, novelist and the screenwriter of Alea's 'Strawberry and Chocolate', talks to Teresa Toledo about Cuba, gays and change

INTOLERANCE

Teresa Toledo: What has been the reaction to 'Strawberry and Chocolate' in Cuba?

Senel Paz: I think the film has a very human dimension and has established a dialogue with its audiences which has generated further dialogues. The significant impact it has had in Cuba goes beyond its defects or qualities. Out in the street people talk about the film as if it were an incident from real life. I think lots of people have thought in retrospect about the issues it raises.

Of course, they identify with these issues. Many people have acted intolerantly.

It's an interesting phenomenon. Different people see the film through Diego's eyes or through David's eyes or even through Miguel's, three different and opposed attitudes to the same problem. I have insisted ever since the story was first published that the central issue is not homosexuality. The problems raised go much further: it is friendship and tolerance that are at stake. The film tells the story of an apprenticeship in tolerance, an apprenticeship in accepting another person as different, in accepting the world as full of diverse and complex people. We must have the will to understand, to listen to, and to accept each other. And this shouldn't simply be an uncritical, passive process – it's about wrapping your mind around another way of seeing the world, another way of living and behaving. The act of admitting that another person can have ideas, feelings and reactions which are completely different to yours, but are also part of human behaviour, is very important.

The film's parameters transcend the anecdotal level of the friendship between a heterosexual and a homosexual and people have understood that in this instance intolerance in respect of a sexual attitude is a metaphor. So the film also addresses religious and racial intolerance and intolerance on the level of ideas, which is the most important of all. Intolerance impoverishes the societies which practise it: by cutting off a section of society, society as a whole loses out because it rejects talent and sensibilities, elements which form part of its complexity. Diego suffers because he is not

tolerated socially and David suffers because he is intolerant of others. It is clear that those of us who have been intolerant towards the ideas and feelings of others have suffered, have lost a lot.

Did you choose a homosexual because intolerance of homosexuals is much more intense?

I think it was very timely and artistically useful that the character was a homosexual. But religious people have endured similar experiences, while there are also people who love Cuba, but have a different social or political project. In Cuban society in recent years there has been a dominant line and anyone who doesn't support it is not to be trusted. Certain objectives which are identified with national salvation, national identity and the future of society are promoted and everything which is out of step with these is rejected. I think this is very negative.

It is important to point out that all the characters in *Strawberry and Chocolate* are marginal. Nancy has become a petty criminal, a prostitute, because she could not live her life in accord with her real sensibility. David is marginal because his desire to act in line with his feelings makes him weak in a society dominated by winners, by people who have no self-doubt. There are people (Diego explains this much better in the story) who find it more difficult to join in, to go to parties, to smile. There are people who have to go against themselves in order to be happy.

The way the subject is treated breaks with the stereotype of how a homosexual who likes someone very different to himself might behave. And it also insists that homosexuals too can behave intolerantly towards others.

The film was never intended, nor did it ever occur to us, to campaign on behalf of homosexuality. It's clear that homosexuals' intolerance and single-minded vision of life are criticised too. There have been many stage versions of my story and though I've never been opposed to them being performed in gay circles, I have opposed them *only* being performed in gay circles because the idea behind my story is one of dialogue between different kinds of people. If there are places (as there are abroad) where ►

◀ homosexuals get together, that's fine, but feeling at ease in that kind of place comes from a feeling of identification. I think we should all be mixed up. One can understand how people who have lived on the defensive develop a certain prickliness, a system of alarms and defences in relation to the rest of society. But in Cuba homophobic sentiments are not the same today as they were ten or 20 years ago, not the same in Havana as in a provincial town and not the same in the Ministry of Construction as in the Ministry of Culture. There is the same diversity as exists in the rest of the world. Things have progressed.

But surely there are some factors – both political and psychological – underlying the oppression of homosexuals that are specific to Cuba?

In Cuba there is the additional ingredient of machismo, which is much more widespread than homophobia. I have found many Cuban homosexuals to be *machista* – men, women, homosexuals, lesbians, everybody here is *machista* in some sense. Machismo leads to a tolerance that isn't fruitful, a couldn't-care-less tolerance, a lack of values. Tolerance and promiscuity are not the same thing – what is enriching in tolerance is understanding between people.

There is a joke in *Strawberry and Chocolate* which highlights another aspect of the situation. When Nancy says, "The outlook's bad, it's going to rain", she gets the response: "Well, the outlook may be bad, but healthcare and education are free." Constant praise of the positive, of our secure future in this, the best of all possible worlds, lulls people to sleep, immobilises them. I think that to ignore the negative aspects of society is both Latin American and typical of so-called socialism – that's what happened in the Eastern bloc countries, in Yugoslavia, in the Soviet Union: "We don't have any nationalist problems". If you look at Cuban

art you would think there were no problems of homophobia, no race relations problems, yet these exist and are very real. I think a society has to begin by knowing itself in as lucid and unblinkered a way as possible. The revolution and socialism have felt a desperate need to enhance their positive image, with the result that ranks close, a monolithic bloc forms and everything is fine and dandy. I've often met people who think that a revolutionary who loves Cuba should not write this kind of film.

Do you think there is a crisis in the making at the level of ethics, morality and solidarity, of all the values we have held aloft for so many years?

There is a crisis of values and ethics, of credibility, of aspirations and projects for the future. I am a very positive person, but I want to ring the alarm in what is an alarming situation. Everything we believed in is at a crossroads and the Cuban people face serious, painful, sad times. But I also think the country has great reserves of moral strength and spiritual energy. The limbo of false security in which we lived was corroding our strength and energy, but now this crisis has stirred them into life, injected a new vigour. Cynicism and optimism, true and false values co-exist within us. I don't wish to underestimate the dangers, but I'm confident that the positive will win out in the end. I hope that my love for my country won't making me confuse what I want with what will happen.

Over the years we have developed noble sentiments such as solidarity, friendship, dignity and equality – values learned while in conflict, submerged in contradictions, not as portrayed in the official image. These qualities have cost sweat, sacrifice and effort, and are deeply embedded. Obviously certain negative values are also very entrenched and the context has only to change for them to come to the surface – as they are doing now. We can only hope that the country will emerge morally and spiritually strengthened, with greater realism. And when I say realism, I mean more awareness of where we have reached, not any false illusion that we have gone further.

Tell me some of the things you would like to see change within Cuban society.

The other day I heard that while the Minister of Culture went to see *Strawberry and Chocolate* in the Chaplin Cinema, with ordinary cinema-goers, it has also been shown in private to particular groups of people. Why can't that class we call the cadres see the film with people from the street? I think one of the big lessons of

the present period for the government and the party is to put an end to the unjust, abusive intolerance and discrimination shown certain sectors and to do away with the wrong-headed, blind faith in deceitful political terms.

I have just moved house using my own means: it wasn't the government, the authorities or the Film Institute that gave me my new home. That's why I'm still on good terms with the government and the Film Institute. It gives you a great sense of freedom to be able to resolve your problems by yourself, using economic means that previously there was no access to. I paid for our trip to Europe myself. When I came over it was because I wanted to and when I returned – well, I had to ask for a little grant, I mustn't exaggerate – it was also because I wanted to. I have gained enormous freedom in relation to my projects: I don't have to get on well with Alfredo Guevara, the president of the Film Institute, to enable me to go abroad or to write my scripts. And I would like to do away with the Cuban custom of donating prizes. If you won a prize abroad of \$1,000 and donated it to the National Liberation Front in El Salvador, you would curry so much political favour you could then go on lots of trips you could never have paid for with the original \$1,000. Yet if you took the money for yourself, you earned no trust in political terms. It is yet one more example of how we deceived ourselves about what is true and what is false in people's feelings.

How does this change in attitude manifest itself in 'Strawberry and Chocolate'?

I think one of the factors which has affected the way *Strawberry and Chocolate* has been received is the public understanding that it is a work created freely by the artists involved – that we can make a Cuban film, in the sense of making a film on behalf of Cuba, the people, our feelings and our culture, where complex ideas are debated and handled with complete freedom, without having to go elsewhere. For some time we might have enjoyed more freedom in our work, in the circulation of ideas, but people insisted it would damage the country, the people, even the revolution. This film shows that one can create works of art with complete freedom within the context of the revolution. The idea of the revolution you and I grew up with is precisely of a revolution where freedom of expression is possible. And we want to go on believing that to be the case, but in practice, not just in theory.

Translated by Peter Bush



**Across the chasm:
Diego and David in
self-conscious debate
in 'Strawberry
and Chocolate'**

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Flaws in his Method

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Brando

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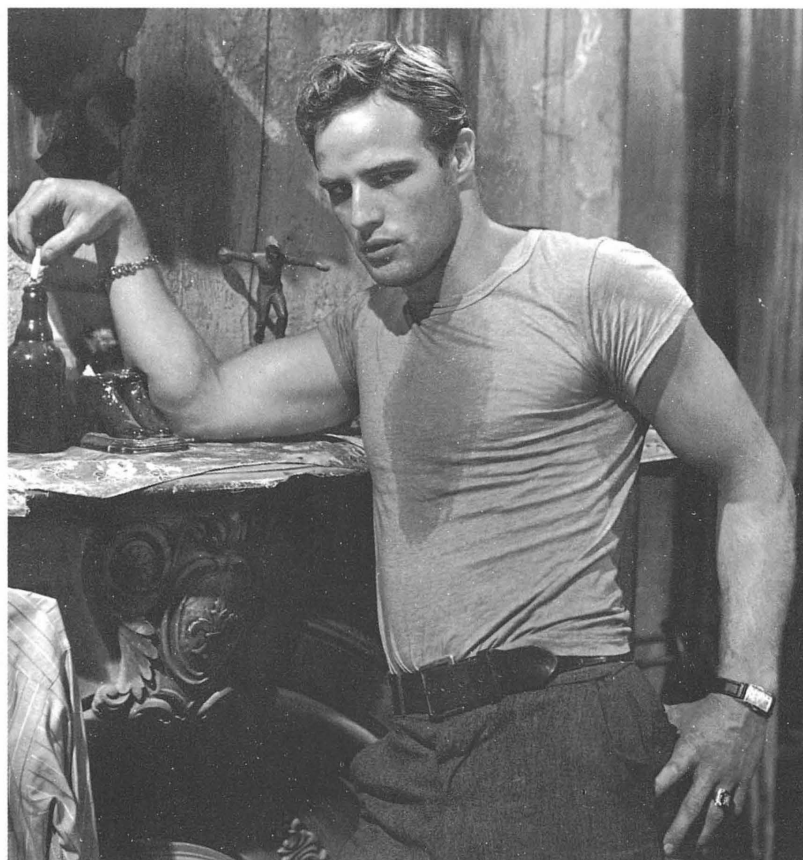
The classic Hollywood biopic has a mythological structure. The Great One is born into stifling and unpromising conditions (there's this farm boy smothered by an unyielding, stentorian father and a flamboyant alcoholic mother...). Then comes the moment of Epiphany (he enrolls in Erwin Piscator's Dramatic Workshop at the New School for Social Research where his mentor, Stella Adler, shows him a vision of a promised land...).

To prove himself worthy, the hero must face adversity, must bear calumny and rejection from the outside world and must look his own demons squarely in the face (he is exposed to the Method, an Americanisation of Stanislavskian theatrical principles which forces him to confront his own reality in the shaping of a role, resulting in the jealousy of his fellows and the derision of the establishment...). Then, having plumbed the depths of himself, he gains the prize, finds the gold, wins the hand of the beautiful princess – the whole world is at his feet (he is a revelatory triumph in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, a lucrative Hollywood career lies before him, the beautiful people – male and female – freely offer him their bodies and he is universally recognised, and imitated, as the greatest actor in the world). The hero is worthy to mediate between lesser mortals and the gods, to show us something of ourselves we never knew existed.

Unfortunately, the biopic version of Marlon Brando's life takes us only to about 1950. It is followed by another quarter of a century which seems more like an interminable mini-series, devoid of any structure but content instead to recycle repetitive themes of self-absorption, satyriasis, stagnation and squander.

Moving from myth to folklore is an index of decline. When Brando's autobiography was recently serialised in a British broadsheet newspaper, an actor friend told me an apocryphal tale allegedly told to him by a well-known screenwriter. This man had taken his maiden aunt (how those two words in themselves indicate that we have left reality) to see Brando in his last great performance in *Last Tango in Paris*, apparently unaware of the sado-erotic nature of the piece. Leaving the theatre, the writer turned in embarrassment to his Wodehouse-ian relative and asked what she thought of the show. "Shameful," the old spinster replied. "What a terrible waste of butter. Margarine would have served just as well."

Waste, indeed, does seem to be the guiding principle of this career. Brando seems to have despised his own talent even more than the industry which exploited it. One colleague remarks: "[his] great heresy is that he refused to worship at the altar of himself." Brando's life story has brought him into contact with many of the most significant social and political movements in the post-war American world: radical politics coalescing around Civil Rights, opposition to the Vietnam war, the struggles of



Native Americans (the chapter on the American Indian Movement is, to my mind, the most fascinating in this book) and ecology; the centrality of Freudianism as a model of the mind and its gradual replacement by New Age technologies and therapies; the importation of Russian and German avant-garde theatrical techniques into the Broadway theatre and the Hollywood film. Why is it, then, that his character seems at base curiously untouched by any of them and ditches them all in favour of solipsistic isolationism?

The story ends, tragically, very much in the present. A generation unaware of Brando's stellar presence, uninfluenced by his outsider persona ("What are you rebelling against?" "Whaddya got?") knows him only as a cameo role in Court TV, a character witness for his son, Christian, on trial for shooting his sister's boyfriend. Brando's final act, thus far, connects him to O. J. Simpson and the Menendez brothers as a celebrity on trial.

Manso's unauthorised biography, standing in competition to its subject's own ghost-written and more circumspect account, is the product of years of research and over 750 interviews, but for those concerned more with the art, craft and industry of the stage and screen than with indecorous accounts of multiple unloving sexual encounters, it is an unsatisfactory read. The absence of a filmography in itself seems to indicate the priorities of the author; the chapter on Christian's shooting of Dag Drollet is as long as many a celebrity biography. Perhaps these 1,100 pages are best synthesised by a piece of doggerel penned by Alan Miller, producer of *The Appaloosa*, one of a string of forgettable movies Brando made in the 60s before his triumphant comeback in *The Godfather*: "His heart, it bleeds for the masses/But the people he works with/get kicked in the asses."

Still, there are compensations. Struggling with this massive tome in which every piece of information, however trivial, is accorded the same status, the reader is guaranteed to emerge with pectorals like Stanley Kowalski or Terry Molloy, even if sampling this stodgy fare results in a gut like Don Corleone or Colonel Kurtz.

Light motifs

Nick Kimberley

The Art of Film Music

George Burt, Northeastern University Press, £32.95 (hb), 278pp

In Roddy Doyle's novel *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*, the narrator recalls going to the cinema as a child: "Whenever there was a battle they played the same music. It was brilliant; you remembered it forever. In the end one of the main fellas was killed... they put him in a boat and covered him with wood; they set fire to it and pushed the boat out. I started humming the music, slower; I knew it was going to happen in the film. And it did."

It always does, at least in most mainstream films. Just as it has been suggested that Wagner's leitmotifs in the *Ring* cycle are aids to the inattentive, so a cynic might suggest that most film music functions as a way of telling the cinematically impaired what's going on: an inversion of pantomime conventions where, instead of the audience yelling, "It's behind you!", the spectacle itself shouts at us, "Look out!"

No doubt plenty of film soundtracks are unsuitable, just as there are many with music so integral that, like Paddy Clarke, we remember it forever. A film without music is rare, yet there's no intrinsic reason why that should be so. It's at least conceivable that, if the technology of sound recording

Stellar presence:
Marlon Brando as
Stanley Kowalski
in 'A Streetcar
Named Desire'

had been more advanced at cinema's birth, then fiction film might have been more a matter simply of recording dialogue, with as little need for music as there was in the theatre.

Not that the theatre did without music altogether. Leaving aside opera – which still flummoxes film-makers – there was melodrama, where speech would be underlined, sometimes underscored by some kind of pit music. The conventions of melodrama, linked to a musical language that did indeed grow from Wagner, still underpin much of our understanding of how music in film works. There are countless exceptions, but in essence the language of film music is Hollywood's language, refined in the 30s and 40s and developed from nineteenth-century European models: tonal, with leanings towards atonality.

The literature on the relationship between film and music expands steadily. The bibliography in Claudia Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (1987) runs to ten pages, and a generous handful of books have appeared since. It's tempting to see it as a weakness of Burt's book that its bibliography runs only to two pages. That would be unfair, but the paucity of reference marks the book as pedestrian, even dull. Anyone who introduces 'The Element of Surprise' with a statement such as, "In many films, the element of surprise is a key issue", is clearly no stylist.

To be fair, Burt makes no such claim. He intends his book for film-makers and composers, so it is more of a handbook than a historical survey; and so practical is its emphasis that matters of theory, speculation and interpretation are more or less ignored. Burt himself has composed scores – notably for Robert Altman's *Fool for Love* – and has an insider's grasp of the nuts, bolts and sprocket holes. He refers to his own work, but the composers on whom he focuses are Hugo Friedhofer (*The Best Years of Our Lives*), Alex North (*The Misfits*), David Raskin (*Laura*) and Leonard Rosenman (*East of Eden*).

The Hollywood mainstream at its best, then. There are copious musical examples and a fair amount of technical language, though Burt is smart enough to put that in italics so it's easy to skip. Most of the text is taken up with passages describing particular scenes and how music works within them, a valuable but limited exercise. I can imagine Burt's classes at Rice University taking the same form, but there he might include film clips to make his argument more immediate.

There would still remain the problem of Burt's unquestioning acceptance of the language of film music as mainstream Hollywood understands it. It's not that the language is 'wrong' – quite the opposite: Hollywood film music is one of the most refined genres in musical history. Yet to understand it better, it helps to realise that it is only one possibility, that rules are not natural but generic.

Take this quote from John Addison, discussing his score for *Sleuth*: "What it had to do with was the mind of the writer (Olivier), who was rather an intellectual and mathematical type; Baroque writing, with harpsichord, seemed to convey this in some strange way." Just how many prejudices and preconceptions can you find in this sentence?

There's plenty more where that came from, and it makes for a rather tedious book. Burt's knowledge and expertise are useful, and anyone who reads *The Art of Film Music* will learn something about the art of film music. But it's precisely that kind of circular argument which limits the book.

Unutterable jest

Simon Louvish

Woody Allen on Woody Allen

Stig Bjorkman (ed), Faber & Faber, £14.99, 288pp

Woody Allen talks too much. A very American compulsion to self-justify, a Jewish compulsion to argue and a New York obsession with the bustle of urban life inform his comedy from its earliest, stand-up roots. Against this gift of the gab, Allen has developed a compulsive desire to become his opposite and transform himself into Ingmar Bergman, the master of pauses and silence. Who better, then, to engage Woody in an exhaustive dialogue on these two poles of his work than Swedish writer and film-maker Stig Bjorkman?

This is the most comprehensive discussion so far by Allen of his films, neatly stacked in chronological order. The Woody Allen that emerges is a craftsman whose real obsession is his work. Keeping his projects shrewdly to standard dimensions and cost, Allen has been able to produce roughly one film a year under a contract which grants him unequalled freedom in terms of script, casting and direction. The result is a body of work unique in the American cinema in its intellectual consistency, a quality even Coppola and Scorsese, working in the mainstream, cannot quite achieve.

Woody Allen would be the first to point out that this enables us to perceive his weaknesses as well as his strengths. He talks, like Truffaut in *Day for Night*, about the pristine idea for a movie which recedes further and further as the production process rolls on. But, as ever, one can judge

only what's on the screen. The hazards of a 'conversation' such as this extended interview is that it tends to avoid the kind of critical challenges which might offend the subject or abort the exercise.

Bjorkman is a largely uncritical admirer, particularly of the 'serious' films which Allen would, I think, like to be seen as his more vital contribution to cinema. *Interiors*, *September*, *Another Woman*, *Crimes and Misdemeanours*, et al. Not that he would devalue his 'entertainment', but there is a palpable search for something deeper, more profound, in his Bergmanesque work.

Any artist is entitled to bridle at the pigeon-holing which assigns him or her to a certain niche or role. But for myself, I remain with the aliens in *Stardust Memories*, who like the earlier, funnier, pictures. It appears to me inescapable that Woody Allen is at his most profound in his comedy and at his shallowest in his portentous mode. At his best, he has created two synthetic works which straddle the divide – *Stardust Memories* and *Zelig*. But as Woody himself points out, no one came to see these movies except the buffs. At his worst, he can create *Shadows and Fog*, a pastiche of Murnau, Fellini and Bergman which merely shows how wide he is of the mark.

The hagiographic interview also shields us from certain factual queries about the films. Those who might dip into editor Ralph Rosenblum's fascinating memoir *When the Shooting Stops – the Cutting Begins* (Da Capo Press, 1986) will find a description of the origins of *Annie Hall* which is at odds with Woody's own account. The film, whose working title was *Anhedonia*, was in its first cut 2 hours and 20 minutes long, and emerged as the success we now know following a long, protracted editing process. The special job, Rosenblum writes, "was to find the plot among all the brilliant skits." Allen pays tribute in Bjorkman's book to Rosenblum (who made Allen's first two movies, *Take the Money and Run* and *Bananas*, into manageable narratives), but remains firmly within auteur bounds. More than his editors, Allen credits the cinematographer, Gordon Willis, with aiding him towards a more mature style.

Nevertheless, there is much that is fascinating and instructive in this long dialogue with an artist who has put a great deal of thought and all his anxieties into his work. Allen is, like his contemporary Scorsese, a voracious film buff of European as well as American movies. It strikes me, reading the book, that they are the last generation who discovered the movies in the cinema, not on television.

And indeed the great virtue of Allen's oeuvre is that it is of the silver screen, and not of the box. The reason so much attention is paid to Allen may be due less to his total merit than to the fact that he is alone – Mel Brooks, his only rival, having succumbed to mush. The great cinematic clowns, W. C. Fields, Chaplin, the Marx Brothers, even Jerry Lewis, are in the archive. The rest is television, safe, confined, pap between the ads.

Woody keeps pushing aside the jester's cap and bells, and if the inane *Manhattan Murder Mystery* is a portent of the well running dry, perhaps he is right. But it was, nevertheless, the jester who could really utter the unutterable, in a world preoccupied, as it still is, by masks.

Straddling the divide: Woody Allen's 'Stardust Memories' mixes the comic and the portentous



Donnish and delirious

Leslie Felperin

Chuck Jones: A Flurry of Drawings

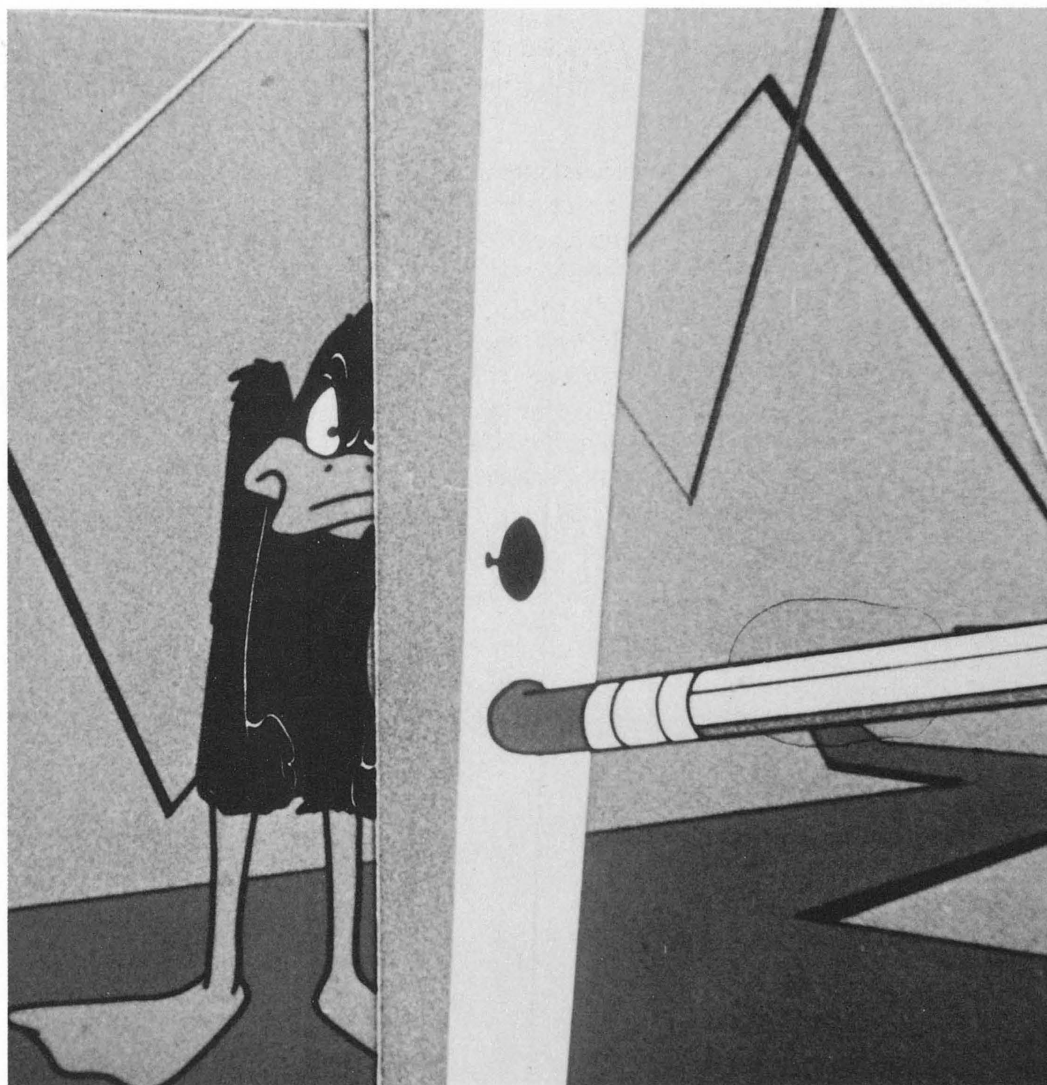
Hugh Kenner, University of California, £12.95, 114pp

Summing up all the directors he worked with at Warner Bros, Mel Blanc, the voice of a thousand cartoon characters, reflected that Chuck Jones was "the best animator of the lot". Very few have ever dared to disagree with this assessment, so Jones' reputation as an auteur has grown in inverse proportion to his declining productivity as a film-maker. While toiling away in relative obscurity at Termite Terrace from the 30s to its demise in the early 60s, Jones directed some of the studio's best-known and loved cartoons, including *Duck Dodgers in the 24½ Century*, *Feed the Kitty*, *Rabbit Seasoning*, almost all the Road Runner movies and every one that featured Pepe Le Pew.

His career afterwards was less distinguished, including a stint at ABC as vice-president in charge of children's programming and occasional forays into directing commercials and specials such as *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* and the feature-length film *The Phantom Tollbooth*. Still going at the age of 81, one of his last jobs was the design of the Robomouse sequence in the critically panned television satire *Stay Tuned!* If his work over the last 30 years has been patchy, it matters not a jot to his admirers, many of whom would be hard pressed to name a single other animation director apart from Walt Disney (a producer, mostly) or Tex Avery.

The phenomenon of Chuck Jones' fame is thought-provoking not because it is undeserved, but because it throws light on how animation is evaluated and read by film culture. It is hardly a coincidence that Jones' reputation flourished at roughly the same time as animation itself became acceptable as an object of critical scrutiny. Auteur theory was gaining ascendancy, and Jones, an articulate man with a sure grasp of the grammar of film form, presented the perfect candidate for animatophilics in search of an icon. He even came equipped with a ready-made masterpiece, *Duck Amuck*, as filmically self-referential as late 60s Godard. Richard Thompson, in an influential all-animation issue of *Film Comment* in 1975, celebrated it as "a good illustration of Noel Burch's dialectic idea of film elements", while Louis Black raved that, "the cartoon stands as [an] almost clinical study of deconstruction of a text". Highly literate and with a taste for high culture, Jones incorporated his influences – for instance *What's Opera Doc?* – if only to parody them, and the critics lapped it up.

For the less intellectual end of his fan base, Jones excelled at character definition, the most accessible aspect of animation. While other directors were masters of the gag (Avery) or exaggeration (Bob Clampett), Jones could infuse personality through the raising of an eyebrow and it is the human qualities of his animal characters that have made them so popular. Russell George, an academic researcher of animation, once remarked that Jones' gift resided in his ability to transmute gags into the very stuff of



Chuck Jones' 'Duck Amuck': infusing personality through the raising of an eyebrow

narrative. This is true especially of the inspired Road Runner cycle. But it is through character that animation has been most successfully marketed, and it is for this aspect of his work that Jones has most often been critically trumpeted.

Chuck Jones: A Flurry of Drawings represents yet another brick in this (un)critical edifice. Part of a tellingly named series, *Portraits of American Genius*, Kenner's book is a well-written, if not especially inspired, contribution to the hagiography that surrounds Jones. The hardcore aficionado will probably be disappointed not to find any new revelations, apart from snippets of conversations the author has had with his subject. For the most part, Kenner relies heavily on the Jones canon, quoting Joe Adamson, Leonard Maltin, and Jones' own autobiography, *Chuck Amuck*.

The point of the book, however, appears not to be an in-depth assessment, but a legitimization of Jones as an artistic genius. Kenner is strangely over-qualified for this task, being a respected critic of literary big guns such as Pound, Joyce, Beckett and Eliot, from the old school of the canon-obsessed New Criticism. At times the rhetoric becomes a little overwrought, if not verging on the risible, as in the following: "What the Termite Terrace zanies found in [selective redrawing] resembles Milton's discovery, circa 1660, of the range of effects blank verse on a printed page could extract from a mid-line pause." Cartoon signs are taken for great wonders in

the book's mix of the donnish and the delirious, itself waxing Miltonic with its predilection for the imperative case – "Now define Perfection", "Consider...", and so on. Kenner rightly discusses Jones' "detached, conceptual mind", but almost to the point where one would think a metaphysical poet was the subject at hand. For instance, after discussing the squash and stretch of Wile E. Coyote falling into the abyss, Kenner remarks, "When those in turn vanish we are left to ponder – oh, the reluctance of Being to succumb to Mutability."

More fundamentally puzzling is that this rapture coexists with often sober assessments of the importance of commercial pressures on production and, even more damaging to Kenner's case for Jones' individual talent, the interdependence of the director and his production team. Jones himself has often redirected praise towards these largely unsung artists, like Ken Harris (animator), Michael Maltese (gag-writer) and most important, Maurice Noble (background artist). At the same time, though, he has managed to retrench his position as 'the greatest living animator' by canny media manipulation and by producing a steady trickle of 'limited editions' of his drawings for a hungry collectors' market. What animation studies needs is fewer of these gushing accounts of admittedly great directors and more challenging investigations of animation's relationship with commodification, since that is where the real genius lies.

And the insides come tumbling out

I'd read the programme notes and was fumbling around in the dark for my seat. "The essential feature of this short film is that after extensive treatment the black in the film allows no light to be projected through it. The result is that only the foreground and subject of the image is projected, and the background is indistinguishable from the space surrounding the screen..."

It was a very long ten minutes indeed, and rumour had it that up-its-own-arse, self-congratulatory wank was afoot. This wasn't a B movie at the Regal, but an 'interesting' ten-minute film at the Art College. I wasn't convinced and my preconceived ideas about experimental short films seemed well founded. But then came Bruce Nauman's grainy black and white *Bouncing Balls*.

I watched agape. So film-making could be like this: take off your clobber, get in the mud and position your bollocks in frame. Then, taking a testicle in your hand, tap upwards and wait for it to stop bouncing around in its little sack. Film at very high speed and enjoy the slow motion, repeat with the other testicle and continue. I seem to remember it lasting ten minutes and being silent, save for the flipping heels and blimey o'riels. It was more a documentation of a performance, but the humour of the piece shone through.

It was like walking into Stelarc's exhibition at the Hayward Gallery at around the same time; there was the artist himself, suspended horizontally from the ceiling like a Victorian clothes dryer; meat hooks pierced his goosey flesh strategically and ropes took the strain of his body; nothing ripped but it could only last 20 minutes before they had to cut him

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n.

There was something confrontational and totally committed about the Stelarc performance that i had not until this point experienced in film; however, Bruce Nauman's bouncing balls were certainly pointing in the right direction and had had an effect on me. I needed to look for more. I was aware of the Vienna Actionists and some of their more bizarre carry-ons, so when i got to see *The Eating, Drinking, Shitting, Pissing Film* by Kurt Kren, i felt as if there were numerous possibilities opening up.

It involved Gunter Brus and friends; eating, drinking, shitting and pissing, first in close up as the food and drink were consumed and then in long shot as we watched various Austrians trotting off across some wasteland to do their business. It was refreshing in a rather smelly way to think that someone had been bothered to record such an everyday event and yet turn it into such a spectacle. There seemed to be dedication from all the performers, in fact they were all straining through dedication. Which reminds me - did anyone notice the poo sequence in Wim Wenders' *Kings of the Road*? I sat smug, safe in the knowledge that it had all been captured on celluloid before.

There was another performance in Gunvor Nelson's film *Take Off* (again using

An artist suspended from a ceiling; landscape in Chris Welsby's films; Stan Brakhage's sublime seeing - these are some of the experiences that fed director Andrew Kotting's appetite for short films

the human body), which titillated and transfixed me: what began as a straightforward striptease degenerated into a gloriously gory process of removing wig, ears, head, breasts, legs and arms until you were left with just a dancing torso; a strobe light then worked its way more and more quickly into the scheme of things to disconcert you further; i didn't know if i was coming or going, and as if that wasn't enough, a trippy electronic soundtrack by Pat Gleeson irritated superbly. The film carries a warning for epileptics, but i warn you.

By this time the great out-of-doors was having an ever-increasing effect on my own work. I was obsessed by the elements, the changing seasons and the demands that performing as well as filming in the landscape put on people. The British film-maker Chris Welsby dealt with a lot of these issues and was both inspirational and reassuring, but i was also interested in trying to tell some sort of story, however obscure, within the experimental film context.

The Running Jumping & Standing Still Film by Richard Lester provided a lot of this. Adults being all silly-billy outside. One man plays a violin in a field, he reads the music, which is on a stand miles away, through a telescope, to turn the pages he cycles off on a bicycle, another pretends that he is a gramophone by holding a needle and running round and round a tree stump on to which an old 78 rpm has been fixed; strange crackly sounds emit. There was something surreal and ridiculously British about the shenanigans; meanwhile Maya Deren's beautiful and mesmerising *At Land* convinced me that the conventional vocabulary of a feature film could be incorporated into the experimental short film format. The end result was dreamlike and entrancing, shot around a coastline and using just natural light.

Stan Brakhage then came along with *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes*, and i did. I can never forget the half hour spent wandering around an autopsy room in silent colour, watching while bodies were neatly split open and then pulled hither and thither, floppy. There were no special effects involved, but what you were looking at was 'real' life and 'real' death, i was moved and it was perhaps at this moment that i realised that what i had been looking for and found through some of these short

experimental films was the 'sublime', something above the ordinary: a photograph by Joel Peter Witkin, that oaf Geoff Hurst scoring goals, *Pig Earth* by John Berger, something to tighten up the trousers, something visceral, something to inspire or behold, an intellectual jolly up.

It was shortly afterwards that i was invited to my first Short Film Festival in Hamburg. I had been warned that these festivals were all heuty teuty tedious affairs, more like an endurance test, but i was to discover a new generation of film-makers incorporating avant-garde ideas within a linear narrative context. Jan Svankmajer was even doing it by including animation with live action.

Short films came without boundaries, there didn't have to be a beginning, middle or end, they could be about anything you wanted, anyone could make them and budgets were irrelevant. Although they were nearly always subjective and ran the risk of falling into the quagmire of pretentious nonsense, when the experiments worked there were moments of sheer magic, they soared. The work of Tony Hill, Phil Mulloy, Roy Andersson or Jane Campion. Films from every neck of the woods, some with subtitles and some with just text, eclectic and foreign.

I often think of Stelarc hanging from the ceiling for 20-odd minutes and for me this has become a strange metaphor for short films: even the duration is right; any longer and the flesh would rip and the insides come tumbling out.

I'd like to conclude twice:

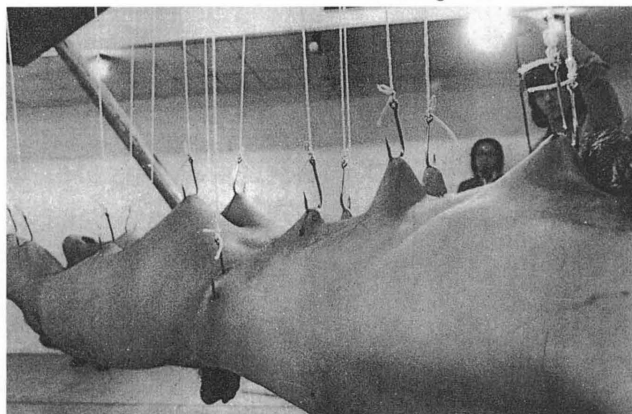
One thing that has become more obvious over the years is that perhaps there is a formula for innovation in feature films, made all the clearer having watched so many short films: first you re-use formulas confirmed in previous success, then throw it off kilter a little by incorporating some disparate amalgamations, narratives, ornamentations and the such like (you can even go so far as kitsch or the grotesque), then throw in a little humour, some action and the odd pair of bristols, be sure to stimulate the imagination through extensive poster campaigns and full use of The Media. None of this means that you will ever produce anything tinglefactor, because that is in the stomach of the beholder, and it is for these moments that i am still searching. I found it in Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* and Sergei Paradjanov's *The Colour of Pomegranates*, but if you want a quick fix then look into the world of short films; experimental, avant-garde, low-budget, independent or whatever.

And a coda in the form of a post-modern smidgeon:

Psychiatrist Oscar Walzburg, 68, shot dead a woman patient in his London office as she told him about her film fantasies: "I couldn't take those nutcases any more," he told the court, where he faced a 25-year sentence.

Which doesn't make him a bad man.

P.S. Rumour has it that next year the ICA will be showing short films with all their feature film programmes.



Total commitment: performance by Stelarc, 1981

Reviews,
synopses and
full credits for
all the month's
new films and
short films

Abgeschminkt (Making Up)

Germany 1992

Director: Katja von Garnier

Certificate

15

Distributor

Electric Pictures

Production Company

Vela-X Filmproduction

In association with

Munich Film and

Television School

The Bavarian

Broadcasting

Corporation

Producer

Ewa Karlström

Production Managers

René Löw

Knut Losen

Jan Schulerberg

Casting

Carola Höhne

Screenplay

Benjamin Taylor

Katja von Garnier

Hannes Jaenicke

Continuity

Sabine Yoch

Director of Photography

Torsten Breuer

Editor

Katja von Garnier

Set Design

Irene Edenhofer

Nikolai Ritter

Cartoons

Sikander Goldau

Costume Design

Birgit Aichele

Make-up

Denise Marx

Rita Absmeier

Music

Peter Wenke

Tillmann Höhn

Sound Editor

Achim Hofmann

Sound Recordist

Rainer Plabst

Dubbing Mixer

Manfred Arbter

Cast

Katja Riemann

Frenzy

Nina Kronjäger

Maischa

Gedeon Burkhard

René

Max Tidof

Mark

Daniela Lunkewitz

Susa

Peter Sattmann

Editor

Jochen Nickel

Party Animal

Carola Höhne

René's Sister

Stefan von Moers

Man with Initiative

Jophi Ries

Bartender

Sybille Hamm

Woman in Pink

Bodybuilder

Giovanni Manganò

4,883 feet

54 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Subtitles

Frenzy is a cartoonist; her best friend Maischa is a nurse. Maischa is boy crazy; Frenzy, who is single, is more worried about her work as she is having a creative block. One week-end Maischa ditches her boyfriend so that she can go out on the town with Frenzy. At an exhibition opening, Maischa spots an eligible young man (who she subsequently learns is called René) and tries to talk to him. The next day she co-opts Frenzy into helping her track him down. They go to the park where he plays football. While Maischa jogs around the track, Frenzy waits on the side-lines, and bumps into a man that she thinks is a bit of jerk.

That night the two women go to a party. René is there and Maischa finally has a date for the next day. She persuades Frenzy to come along with her since René has a friend. The friend transpires to be the man in the park, Mark. Maischa goes off with René and ends up in bed with him. Frenzy and Mark spend the day horsing around. When Frenzy returns home, she finds a distraught Maischa, who now feels rejected. Frenzy, however, plans on a second date with Mark. She becomes anxious about when he will call, but at the same time starts having new ideas

for her cartoon strip. Maischa resolves that she doesn't need to have men in her life for the moment. Mark does call and since he is in the army, Frenzy looks forward to an occasional relationship with him.

Katja von Garnier's featurette has already won much acclaim, with Hollywood offers apparently flooding in for the young director. It started out as a graduation project but, mindful of a more commercial approach, von Garnier persuaded a handful of German television stars to work on it. In this respect, it is not surprising that it feels like a well-crafted episode of some television series – *thirtysomething* springing to mind, particularly the 'Melissa' chapter. Consequently *Making Up* does not feel that strikingly original, with its themes as tired and obvious as the rather dreadful soft rock soundtrack. Certainly Frenzy is little different from the young photographer in the 80s American show. She pursues her career as a comic strip artist, working on 'Rubi – The Mosquito Woman'. But this visual motif is not exploited – a shame since a 'Rubi' story could have been used to counterpoint the film's rather simple narrative.

Predictably, Frenzy's male boss is not very encouraging, suggesting that the cartoon should be "more up-beat" and that her Rubi character should "have bigger tits". There is the sense that her involvement with her work precludes relationships with men. Frenzy is resolutely independent and tired of life's struggles with the opposite sex. Yet at the same time, *Making Up* concludes with a rather cheap pay-off, with Frenzy overcoming her artistic anxieties just when love – or at least the possibility of some relationship and, ideally, a casual one at that – seems to be around the corner.

Maischa provides a rather obvious contrast. She is a nurse who acquires boyfriends to do things around the house such as putting up shelves. With an ever optimistic attitude, she sets out to 'conquer' men but ends up being used by them. While she is being subjected to the narcissist René's workout-style love-making, which in the end makes her feel hollow "as a doll", Frenzy is having fun in a playground getting to know Mark.

Von Garnier is hardly subtle as she cross-cuts between the two scenes. The two women's different experiences resolve in one learning to put up shelves herself, while the other proves to be just as dependent on that phone-call as her friend, checking, as countless women have done before her, that the line works when the call seems overdue. At the end, the friends joke that they should set up a business to make women immune to men. For, of course, it is the men who are the mosquitos, and women need them like a case of malaria. It's the old story. While von Garnier is certainly an accomplished director, she should be a little more inventive with her story-board.

Lizzie Francke

Above the Rim

USA 1994

Director: Jeff Pollack

Certificate

15

Distributor

First Independent

Production Company

New Line Productions

Executive Producer

James D. Brubaker

Producers

Jeff Pollack

Benny Medina

Executive in Charge of Production

Deborah Moore

Creative Executive

Helena Echegoyen

Associate Producers

Mara Manus

Steve Greener

Aaron Meyerson

Production Executive

Timothy Gray

Production Supervisor

Diane Conn

Production Office

Co-ordinator

Dawn Murphy Riley

Unit Production Manager

James D. Brubaker

Location Consultant

Lysbeth Hopper

Executive in Charge of Post-production

Joe Fineman

Post-production Supervisor

Elizabeth Fox

Assistant Directors

Howard McMaster

Mary Rae Thewlis

Parnes Cartwright

Casting

Marie E. Nelson

Ellyn Long Marshall

Screenplay

Barry Michael Cooper

Jeff Pollack

Story

Jeff Pollack

Benny Medina

Script Supervisor

Deirdre Horgan Aska

Director of Photography

Tom Priestley Jnr

2nd Unit Directors of Photography

Richard C. Kratina

Robert Wagner

Camera Operators

Craig Di Bona

David Knox

Opticals

Howard A.

Anderson Co.

R.G.B. Optical Inc.

Editors

Michael Ripp

James Mitchell

Production Designer

Ina Mayhew

Set Decorator

Paul Weathered

Set Dressers

Anthony Baldasare

Douglas Fecht

Stephen Finkin

Mitch Towse

Suzanne E. Cestare

Scenic Artists

Sarah G. Conly

Arthur Dworin

Mikhail Ivenitsky

Storyboard Consultant

Warren Drummond

Costume Design

Karen Perry

Wardrobe Supervisor

Jennifer Bryan

Make-up Artist

Ellie Winslow

Hair stylist

Larry M. Cherry

Title Design

Neal Thompson

Silver Straw

Productions

Music

Marcus Miller

Music Supervisors

Anita Camarata

Benny Medina

Music Editor

Earl Ghaffari

Music Executives

Suge Knight

Dr. Dre

Toby Emmerich

Songs

"Pain" by Tupac

Shakur, R. Walker,

performed by 2Pac;

"Deeper" by Mknoto

Fields, performed by

Lord G.; "Mobbin"

With Tha' Dogg Pound"

by Dat Nigga Daz,

Kurupt the Kingpin,

performed by Tha

Dogg Pound;

"Anything" by Brian

Alexander Morgan,

performed by SWV,

Allen Gordon Jnr

(aka Allstar), Joe; "Part

Time Lover" by Devane

Swing, Darryl Pearson,

performed by H-Town;

"Pump, Pump" by

Snoop Dogg, Dr. Dre,

Lil' Malik, performed

by Snoop Doggy Dog,

Lil' Malik (aka Lil

Hershey Loc); "Mi

Monte Rite" by Lord

G., C. Small, C. Lane,

performed by Lord G.;

"Just Say Ya No" by

CPO, Tony "T" Green,

performed by CPO-Boss

Hog; "Alright" by

Vincent Berry,

performed by Terron

Brooks; "I'm Still in

Love With You" by

Al Green, Al Jackson

Jnr, Willie Mitchell,

performed by Al B.

Sureli; "Crack 'em"

by Ronald Watkin,

Kevin White, Sammie

Williams, Scottie

Bowen, Tony White,

Quick, performed by

O.F.T.B.; "Dogg Pound

4 Life" by Dat Nigga

Daz, Kurupt the

Kingpin, Snoop Dogg,

performed by Tha

Dogg Pound Gangstas,

Dat Nigga Daz, Snoop

Dogg, Kurupt the

Kingpin; "Didn't Mean

to Turn You On" by

Dee, KK, Quik,

performed by 2nd II

None; "Oh Shit" by

J. Martinez, T. Hardson,

E. Wilcox, D. Stewart,

performed by The

Pharcyde; "Theme

from Shaft" by Isaac

Hayes; "Worldwide"

by A. Adams,

performed by Akinyele;

"Old Times' Sake" by

Miller, Brace, Strong,

performed by Sweet

Sable; "(So Far) the

Ghetto Been Good

To Me" by A. Hill,

performed by YZ;

"Afro Puffs" by Dat

Nigga Daz, The Lady

of Rage, performed by

by Naughty By Nature; "Holler if Ya Hear Me" by Tupac Shakur, Live Squad, N. Whitfield, B. Strong, performed by 2Pac, Live Squad; "Stick 'em Up" by Adam Horowitz, Adam Yauch, Mike Diamond, Wendell Fite, performed by The Beastie Boys; "Pour Out a Little Liquor" by Tupac Shakur, performed by Thug Life, 2Pac Shakur; "Spirit Cheers" by and performed by The Georgetown University Pep Band; "Regulate" by and performed by Nate Dogg, Warren G.

Supervising Sound Editor
Craig Berkey

Dialogue Editors
Dave Grant
David Melhase
Daniel Irwin
Dan Jamele
Louis Creveling
Steve Scoville

ADR Editor
Tim Boggs

Foley Editor
Danielle Ghent

Production Sound Mixer
Michael Barosky

ADR Mixer
Derek Marcell
Foley Mixer
David Torres

Sound Re-recording Mixers
John Ross
Joshua E. Schneider
Craig Berkey

Sound Effects Editor
Matt Waters
Craig Sadler
Mark Cookson
Lisle Engle
Stewart Nelson
Piero Mura
Paul Urmson

Foley Artists
Robert Friedman
Paige Pollack
Ginger Geary

Loop Group
LA Mad Dogs

Technical Sports Consultant
Cecil Watkins

Technical Basketball Adviser
Richard "Pee Wee" Kirkland

Stunt Co-ordinator
Jeff Ward

Cast
Duane Martin
Kyle-Lee Watson
Leon
Shep
Tupac Shakur
Birdie
David Bailey
Rollins
Tonya Pinkins
Mailika Williams
Marlon Wayans
Bugaloo
Bernie Mac
Flip Johnson
Byron Minns
Monroe
Sherwin David Harris
Motaw
Shawn Michael Howard
Bobby
Henry Simmons II
Starnes
Iris Little Thomas
Waitress
Michael Rispoli
Richie
Eric Nies
Montrose
Mill Raftery
Himself
James Williams
Speedy
Richard Ray Kirkland
Phil Redd
Tyrone Batista
Tyrone
Cinnamon Paige
Young Woman
Debra Rubins
Hostess
Frank Martin
Will
Jesse Williams
Robert Harvey
Officials
Cuffee
Anthony Hargraves
Referees
Darien Berry
Younger Player
Lakeesha E. Allen
Sherrese Clark
Annie Charles
Aspen Davis
Charlene Levi
Tameeka McKinney
Dannell G. Ruiz
Leslie Terrero
Monarch Cheerleaders
Kenneth Bantun
Howard Bond
Troy Bowers
Roger Brooks
Dorian Graham
Marion Jenkins
Gil K. Kimble Jr
Shabar Lassen
Troy Trusdale
Tracey Walston
Sam Worthen
Bombers & Birdmen

8,787 feet
98 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
DeLuxe



Net value: Eric Nies, Duane Martin

but ran away when his best friend fell to his death from a roof as they played – an accident caused by Shep's arrogance, and which he dreams of constantly.

The next day, Rollins asks Shep to replace him as coach, but Shep refuses. Kyle tells Rollins that at the upcoming neighbourhood Shoot-Out, he'll play for Birdie's team, not the school's. In a graveyard, Birdie finds Shep, standing by his mother's tombstone; they are brothers. That night, Kyle, Bugaloo and Birdie go out on the street. As they drive, Kyle sees Shep, who is replaying the game which killed his friend, and is surprised at his skill. Birdie happens upon two drug-dealing cronies, and beats them up. Shep meets Kyle's mother, Mailika, for a movie. When Kyle finds out, he is appalled. Later, with Birdie, he is told by Flip that Shep and Birdie are brothers. That night, as Kyle plays for his school, watched by Shep and Mailika, Birdie slices Flip to death. At the game, Kyle's play disintegrates and he is taken off. In the locker room, he tells Shep to stay away from Mailika. Shep visits Mailika to tell her he is leaving town, and she dismisses him for walking out on Kyle. Shep finds Kyle, tells him that Birdie killed Flip, and beats him at a game.

On the day of the Shoot-Out, Kyle gives Birdie back Bugaloo's money, and announces that he'll be playing for Rollins. Birdie says that if Kyle doesn't throw the game, the college recruiters will find out about his help. Rollins tells Kyle that his scholarship has been granted. As Rollins' team struggle, Shep appears, and offers to play. Between them, Shep and Kyle win the game. Birdie orders Kyle to be shot, but Shep leaps in front of Kyle to take the bullet. Later, Bugaloo shoots Birdie dead. Later still, Mailika, Rollins and a recovered Shep watch Kyle play for his college on TV.

If you thought it was no longer possible for a character to appear in the final reel of a sports movie and say "Put me on, coach!" and go on to win a game in the final second, you were wrong. Jeff Pollack's directing and co-scripting debut is full of such scenes. It's as if he'd been told that a sports movie must be a set of clichés, and was worried he might miss one. *Above the Rim* is comprehensively unsurprising, full of aspirations and expectations fulfilled. In small doses, or with the nerve for an avalanche of sentiment on the level of Barry Levinson's *The Natural*, this might still be rousing.

But Pollack simply pushes so many worn-down buttons, in such a perfunctory manner – just another shift on the American dream – that the emotional connection is nil. Feeble as a sports movie, *Above the Rim* is pulled back from the brink only by its gangsta background, and even here it has problems.

These scenes can safely be credited to co-writer Barry Michael Cooper, as they expand on the flaws of his previous films *New Jack City* and, especially, *Sugar Hill*. Cooper seems to believe that any scenario involving black people in New York will involve gangsta temptation, and that all New York gangstas will have a brother trying to make good. This is not far from the essence of much current black American art, specifically rap music and thrillers, both of which are informed by the intersection of crime with everyday black urban life. Cooper's problem is that he can't raise the stakes of his dramas with enough conviction to make either aspect count. His good brothers are too saintly to be breathing, let alone to justify the moral triumphs he allows them, and which he seems to engineer – as with Shep's healed bullet-hole – by the miracle of narrative conformity. The perceived need for social comment in black thrillers just confuses him. In a film about a low-level gangster corrupting low-level sport, each element drags down the other, till the winning of a basketball game – and the fact that it can trigger two gangland hits – seem equally dumb. The missing link is suggested when Shep takes Mailika to a revival of *Shaft*. It's that film's air of unconscious energy which made *New Jack City*, flawed and clumsy as it often was, so enjoyable, and which even *Sugar Hill* took a few guilty hits from. *New Jack City*, too, delivered its moral pieties with a smirk. *Above the Rim*'s social conscience is dutifully inept. As slice-of-life and gangsta pic and sports film, it fumbles the ball.

Its details are better. Some of the dialogue is unusually free-flowing, some actors hit the script's strange edges (Leon blank, Tonya Pinkins distracted). Marcus Miller's score, too, is especially effective. The soundtrack is also stuffed with rap and swingbeat, but this only uncovers more failings. For all the film's welcome use of rap's noise, it neither matches nor successfully exploits the music's narrative economy and openness. Unlike Abel Ferrara's use of *Schooly D*, for instance, this is music plastered on more in hope than understanding. Warren G's 'Regulate', played over the credits, has more soul, bloodshed and sadness in three minutes than this movie in a hundred.

Somewhere in the muddle is a simpler, rougher film. Pollack says he was inspired by Harlem's street basketball, played at a high level by people unlikely to make it as pros. If he'd decided to follow that through, the unforced conviction of Steven Zaillian's *Innocent Moves* – which worked with street chess! – might have been his.

Nick Hasted

Ahfei Zhenjuang (Days of Being Wild)

Hong Kong 1990/91

Director: Wong Kar-Wai (Wang Jiawei)

Certificate

12

Distributor

Made in Hong Kong

Production Company

In-Gear Film

Production

Executive Producer

Alan Tang

Producer

Rover Tang

Associate Producer

Joseph Chan

(Chan Wing-Kwong)

Production Manager

Jacky Pang

(Pang Yee-Wah)

Post-production

Supervisor

Siu Wing

Assistant Directors

Rosanna Ng

(Ng Wai-San)

Johnny Kong

(Kong Yee-Shing)

Action Directors:

Tung Wan-Wai

Tsui Pui-Wing

Poon Kin-Kwan

Screenplay

Wong Kar-Wai

(Wang Jiawei)

Continuity

Wong Wai-Hung

Chan Bo-Shun

Director of Photography

Christopher Doyle

2nd Unit Directors of Photography

Ngai Chi-Kwan

Lau Wai-Keung

Optical Director

Lui Lai-Wah

Supervising Editor

Patrick Tam

(Tam Kar-Ming)

Editor

Kai Kit-Wai

Production Designer

William Chang

(Zhang Shuping)

Special Effects

Chang Siu-Lang

Wardrobe Supervisor

Luk Ha-Fong

Make-up

Lo Shiu-Lin

Tsang Ming-Fai

Hairstylists

Herman Law

Lee Kuen

Choreography

Eddie de Guzman

Music Supervisor

Terry Chan

(Chan Ming-Tao)

Songs/Music Extracts

Standards, including

"Canto Siboney" by

Ernesto Lecuana

Sound Recording

Chan Wai-Hung

Recording Consultant

Benny Chiu

(Chu Chi Ha)

Stunt Co-ordinator

Joseph Chi-Chiong

Chavez

Cast

Leslie Cheung

(Zhang Guorong)

Yuddy

Maggie Cheung

(Zhang Manyu)

Su Lizhen

Andy Lau (Liu Dehua)

Tide

Carina Lau (Liu Jialing)

Leung Fung-Ying

aka Lulu, Mimi

Rebecca Pan (Pan Dihua)

Rebecca

Jacky Cheung

(Zhang Xueyou)

Zeb

Tony Leung

(Liang Chowel)

Smirk

Daniilo Antunes

Rebecca's Lover

Hung Mei-Mei

The Amah

Ling Ling-Lung

Nurse

Tita Muñoz

Yuddy's Mother

Alicia Alonoe

Housekeeper

Elena Lim So

Hotel Manageress

Mariton Fernandez

Hotel Maid

Angela Pinos

Prostitute

Nonong Talbo

Train Conductor

8,449 feet

93 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Agfacolor

Cantonese, Mandarin,

Shanghaiese, and English

Subtitles

Hong Kong, April 1960. Raised by his Shanghaiese foster mother Rebecca, who has always refused to reveal his true parentage, Yuddy is an indolent, womanising playboy. He seduces Su Lizhen, who sells soft drinks at the football stadium, but drops her when she talks of marriage, taking up instead with the bargirl Leung Fung-Ying, who works under the names Lulu and Mimi. His best male friend is the working-class Zeb, a former neighbour who reveres Yuddy and dreams of dating "Mimi" when Yuddy drops her.

Su Lizhen, obsessed by Yuddy, hangs around his flat at night, where she is found and consoled by the patrol cop Tide. At the end of a long night's ►

◀ talk, during which he reveals that he always wanted to be a sailor but stayed in Hong Kong to look after his sick mother. Tide tells Su that she can always reach him if she needs help by calling a public phone box at a certain time. Soon after, though, Tide's mother dies, and he goes to sea.

When Rebecca plans to emigrate to the States with an elderly sugar daddy, Yuddy browbeats her into naming his real mother, a rich Chinese in the Philippines. Determined to visit her, he breaks with Leung and hands over his flash car to Zeb. Leung goes to pieces over losing him; Zeb sells the car and gives her the money, so that she can follow Yuddy to Manila.

Yuddy's mother refuses to see him. Yuddy gets very drunk in Chinatown, losing his wallet and watch to a prostitute. The man who comes to his rescue is Tide, in town waiting for a ship. Next day at Manila Station, Yuddy double-crosses a Filipino man who is supplying him with a fake US passport; he and Tide flee for their lives on to a train. But they are followed and Yuddy is shot in the chest. Before dying, Yuddy learns that Tide knows Su Lizhen and asks him to tell her he forgot her. Leung arrives in Manila to look for Yuddy. Su Lizhen is lonely and bored working in the football stadium box office. Elsewhere in Hong Kong, a gambler known as Smirk slicks back his hair and packs a wad of notes as he prepares for a night out.

Days of Being Wild is already widely accepted as a modern classic, but it has had a worse than bumpy ride since an earlier version premiered in Hong Kong in December 1990. (The present version is Wong Kar-Wai's definitive cut, prepared for international release.) The first-release business in Pacific Asia was so poor that a planned Part Two – centred on Tony Leung's gambler character, glimpsed here only in the closing scene, and set in 1966 – was never completed, although Wong Kar-Wai's recent *Ashes of Time* (*Dong Xie Xi Du*) seemingly does much of what he intended to do in that film. This film's 'mistake', in the eyes of Asian audiences, was to defy all expectations aroused by the casting of six of the region's top stars; it took two re-releases, a lot of critical support and a slew of Hong Kong Film Awards to rehabilitate the film and Wong's career.

Wong himself was only two years old in his native Shanghai in 1960, and so *Days of Being Wild* represents a considerable feat of imaginative reconstruction. It's also a tour de force of non-linear narrative, atmospherics, poetic rhythms and (thanks to sensational camerawork and design) visual writing – all of which sets it far apart from the slipshod norms of the Hong Kong film industry. The film is at once highly specific in its details and hallucinatory in its effect, a seeming contradiction that prevents it from lapsing into retro-chic for its own sake. Its essentially discrete scenes coalesce around elastic perceptions of time and space:

clocks/watches and mirrors are key motifs, and Wong pays both formal and thematic attention to the ways his characters experience the passing of time. Fittingly, the intermittent source-music to which the minimal drama is choreographed oscillates between languorous Hawaiian steel guitars and bouncy Latino cha-cha arrangements.

As an existential account of solitary souls in random orbits, the film blows away the entire body of recent French 'designer' cinema. As a touchstone for Hong Kong's specific identity and psyche, it's close to sublime. Aside from the hapless, defeated Zeb, the characters are rootless and uncommitted to the territory: Rebecca is in extended transit between Shanghai/Manila and the USA, Su is constantly on the verge of returning home to Macau, Tide wants to drift, Yuddy wallows in inertia until he chooses to seek out his own death – an event the camera celebrates with a stunning Steadicam shot that is its only decisive movement in the whole film. Their relations with each other are consequently hesitant and unstable, quivering with a yearning for the warmth and commitment that might have been, balanced between dependency and hatred. Concomitant factors are the characters' shaky sense of ambition and self-esteem, the endemic inability to value anything, and the moments of hysteria and anguish that bespeak unvoiced spiritual needs. This adds up to a view of Hong Kong and its people that looks forward to 1997 at least as much as it crystallises the city's population-growth pangs of the 1960s. But the tone is tender and elegiac, never recriminatory or alarmist.

Nothing in Wong's previous work as a screenwriter or director anticipated the structure or poetic density of *Days of Being Wild*. If he had been able to realise the film as the intended diptych, the play with levels of time and memory would apparently have been even more sophisticated; he would also have been able to broaden his vision of the quintessential Hong Kong protagonist by matching Leslie Cheung's playboy (the absurd name 'Yuddy' is an invention of the film's original subtitle) with Tony Leung's gambler. The enigmatic finale aside, though, the film feels complete enough as it stands: the poetic play with the established personae of its stars offers a level of satisfaction all its own, and the interwoven visual and aural motifs provide a credible level of consistency.

With hindsight, we know that Wong Kar-Wai is capable of taking these formal ideas and themes in other directions: *Ashes of Time* and *Chungking Express* (1994) use different forms and tonalities to get at similar places in the mind and heart from other angles of approach. They also confirm Wong as a key film-maker for the 1990s. But *Days of Being Wild* will remain a peak in his filmography, and a landmark in Hong Kong cinema: the first film to rhyme nostalgia for a half-imaginary past with future shock.

Tony Rayns

Caro Diario (Dear Diary)

Italy/France 1994

Director: Nanni Moretti

Certificate
15

Distributor
Artificial Eye

Production Company
Sacher Film/Banfilm/
La Sept Cinéma/
RAI/Studio Canal Plus
In association with
Rai Uno
Canal Plus

Producers

Angelo Barbagallo
Nanni Moretti
Nella Banfi

Production Manager

Luigi Lagrasta
Assistant Director
Riccardo Milani

Screenplay

Nanni Moretti

Director of Photography

Giuseppe Lanci

Editor

Mirco Garrone

Production Designer

Marta Maffucci

Costume Design

Maura Zuccherofino

Costume Supervisor

Maria Rita Barbera

Make-up

Gianfranco Mecacci

Hair

Michele Vigliotta

Music

Nicola Piovani

Songs/Music Extracts

"Inevitabilmente"

by L. Schiavone,

E. Ruggieri, performed

by Fiorella Mannoia;

"I'm Your Man" by and

performed by Leonard

Cohen; "Batonga" by

Angélique Kidjo, Jean

Hébrail, performed by

Angélique Kidjo; "Didi"

by Khaled Hady

Brahim, performed

by Khaled; excerpt

from "The Köln

Concert" by and

performed by Keith

Jarrett

Sound Recordist

Franco Borni

Sound Mixer

Daniilo Moroni

Digital Sound Editor

Filippo Bussi

Cast

Nanni Moretti

Nanni Moretti

On My Vespa:

Giovanna Bozzolo

Sebastiano Nardone

Antonio Petrocchi

Actors in Italian Film

Giulio Base

Car Driver

Italo Spinelli

On the Wall at

Spinaceto

Carlo Mazzacurati

Film Critic

Jennifer Beals

Alexandre Rockwell

Themselves

Islands:

Renato Carpentieri

Gerardo

Raffaella Lebboroni

Marco Paolini

First Salina Couple

Claudia Della Seta

Lorenzo Alessandri

Second Salina Couple

Antonio Neuwiller

Mayor of Stromboli

Conchita Airoidi

Inhabitant of Panarea

Riccardo Zinna

Inhabitant of Aliandi

Moni Ovadia

Lucio

Doctors:

Valerio Magrelli

Sergio Lambiase

Roberto Nobile

Dermatologists

Gianni Ferrarotto

Assistant to the Prince

Pino Gentile

Allergist

Mario Schiano

Prince of

Dermatologists

Serena Nono

Reflexologist

Yu Ming Lun

Tou Yui Chang Pio

Chinese Doctors

Umberto Contarello

Assistant to the

Chinese Doctors

9,071 feet

100 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Subtitles

Nanni Moretti decides to film his own diary, in three chapters. In the first, 'On my Vespa', Moretti rides his scooter through Rome during the deserted month of August. He narrates his off-screen reflections about his childhood and the decay of Rome. He sees an Italian film in which all the characters reflect on their moral and spiritual decline since they were young, which depresses him. Stopping at a traffic light, he tells a passing motorist that he never feels at home with what the majority of people think. He continues driving, looking at houses, even inspecting them, pretending he is conducting location research for a musical.

Moretti muses that seeing the film *Flashdance* changed his life, and that he would love to dance like Jennifer Beals.

Coming across a band playing *merengue* music in the middle of the day while young couples dance, he watches and joins in the singing. Returning from a drive to a housing estate, he encounters Jennifer Beals walking with her husband, film director Alexandre Rockwell. He goes to see *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*; immensely depressed, he seeks out the reviewer who wrote a favourable piece on the film, making him weep with shame at his pretentious reviews. He rides out to the site of Pasolini's murder.

Chapter Two: 'Islands'. Moretti travels to Lipari to visit Gerardo, a friend who has lived there for 11 years studying Joyce's *Ulysses*, and hasn't watched television for 30 years. Moretti is trying to write a new film, but there is too much traffic and noise, and the two of them travel to Salina for peace and quiet. During the trip, Gerardo watches television and is entranced. Salina is dominated by only children, to whom all parents defer. A couple boast that their son has never had a babysitter, because they have always stayed in with him. As a result, they have read most of the classics of literature and philosophy. Moretti and Gerardo leave for Stromboli, where the mayor reveals to them his plans to modernise the island. On the crater of the volcano, Gerardo sends Moretti to ask a group of Americans for the latest news of a soap opera, *The Bold and the Beautiful*. They travel to Panarea, where they are met by a woman who organises cocktail parties and business dinners; they instantly depart for Alicudi, the most remote island. Learning there is no television, Gerardo runs away, screaming.

Chapter Three: 'Doctors'. Moretti films the last session of his own chemotherapy. He tells the story of how he arrived there. He starts to itch one day, and visits the dermatologist, who prescribes a series of drugs, which prove ineffective. He sees more specialists and accumulates many different drugs, but none works. He sees a reflexologist, and attends acupuncture sessions. He gets worse. Finally, after a CAT scan, which the hospital radiologist wrongly interprets as indicating an untreatable tumour, he finds he has Hodgkin's disease, which is treated. From now on, he will drink a glass of water every day before breakfast.

Nanni Moretti is a film-maker of immense charm; not the sentimental cuteness beloved of British audiences who made such a huge success of *Cinema Paradiso*, but the real thing: a gentle irony and effortless control of character which enables him to say the simplest things with maximum effect. His previous work has always contained autobiographical undertones, but this time he has gone all the way. His message in *Dear Diary* could be interpreted as a trite one – it is essentially a feel-good movie, with a few wry asides on modern society thrown in along the way – but the unravelling of his visual diary is so skilfully paced that one is left feeling something pro-

found has taken place.

Not that the film is entirely convincing: the central section, as Moretti explores a handful of islands with his Joyce scholar-turned-telly addict friend Gerardo, is a little too obvious in its targets and drags a little. But even this episode contains delightful touches of wit (Gerardo, the great high-culture intellectual, finally succumbs to soap opera mania while reading a book in a ferry called the *Giovanni Bellini*) and lightly-applied satirical brushstrokes; the *bambini*-dominated parents of Salina in particular could have been much more harshly portrayed by a cruder commentator than Moretti.

The film's greatest moments are in the first and third chapters. In the first, Moretti roams the sun-soaked streets of Rome, but manages to avoid banality by ignoring virtually all of the city's historic sights; he prefers instead to wander round the suburbs and housing projects, finding something positive to say in each case. It is a shamelessly romantic view (has Rome ever been portrayed with so little traffic?), which dovetails perfectly with the director's disdain for those who wish to bring depression, violence and take-away pizzas to his beloved city. Why, he asks, should anyone who lives in such a vibrant, bracing milieu want to see films such as *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*? The chapter's final episode, in which Moretti visits the site of Pasolini's brutal murder, has a haunting quality as the soundtrack (from Keith Jarrett's piano solo *The Köln Concert*) is allowed to run uninterrupted alongside the director's lengthy tracking shots (Moretti's use of music throughout is superbly conceived, drawing on an ethnically eclectic mix of styles which includes Beninese singer Angélique Kidjo and Algeria's Cheb Khaled).

Much darker in tone is Moretti's final chapter, in which he tells of the series of mistaken and careless diagnoses which he experienced while all the time suffering from Hodgkin's disease. The episode's jolting opening, using a real-life film of Moretti's final chemotherapy session, is followed by a succession of encounters with the medical profession, which resonate with frustration and bitterness. The tone is understated throughout; when Moretti sits in a bran bath, on the recommendation of a reflexologist, the camera lingers on his face just long enough to register the humiliation and deep sense of thwarted anger which is so familiar to anyone who has suffered a mysterious illness. Although there is humour throughout the chapter, it is intensely uncomfortable to watch, and Moretti has the good taste not to dwell on the terminal verdict mistakenly delivered by the hospital specialist to the director's friends. The whole affair is doubly moving for its unassuming narration; when Moretti smiles to camera at the end of his ordeal and downs his daily glass of water, life is being affirmed in the most modest, and effective, of ways.

Peter Aspden

Corrina, Corrina

USA 1994

Director: Jessie Nelson

Certificate
PG

Distributor
Guild

Production Company
New Line Cinema productions

Executive Producers
Ruth Vitale
Bernie Goldmann

Producers
Jessie Nelson
Steve Tisch

Executive in Charge of Production
Deborah Moore

Line Producer
Eric McLeod

Associate Producer
Joseph Fineman

Production Executive
Carla Fry

Production Co-ordinator
M. Ginnane Carpenter

Unit Production Manager
Eric McLeod

Location Managers
Lisa Stewart

Post-production Supervisor
Elizabeth Fox

Assistant Directors
Phillip Christon

Director of Photography
David Minkowski

Additional Photography/Camera Operator
Geary McLeod

Steadicam Operators
Kirk Gardner

Opticals
Kurt Braun

Editor
Lee Percy

Production Designer
Jeannine Claudia

Art Director
Dina Lipton

Set Design
Louisa Bonnie

Set Decorator
Lauren M. Gabor

Set Dressers
Mike Malone

Special Effects
Henry "Bud" Fanton

Costume Design
W.C. Nearhood

Hairstylists
Don Elliot

Make-up Artists
Marc Duncan

Music
Mike Thurman

Music
Robert Young

Music
Daniel Goldsmith

Music
John Quittner

Music
Lou Carlucci

Music
Francine Jamison

Music
Tanchuck

Music
Whoopi Goldberg

Music
John Hayles

Music
Mike Germain

Music
Deborah La Mia

Music
Denaver

Music
Hairstylists

Music
Candy Walker

Music
Julia Walker

Music
Michael Ross

Music
Title Design

Music
R.E.D. Productions

Music
Rick Cox

Music
Themes:

Music
Thomas Newman

Music
Jingles:

Music
Fred Kaz

Music
Music Executive

Music
Toby Emmerich

Music

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How life is: Tina Majorino, Whoopi Goldberg

Oleta Adams; "Trois Gymnopédies" by Erik Satie, performed by John Beasley

Supervising Sound Editor
Steve Richardson

Dialogue Editors
Lewis Goldstein

ADR Editors
James Matheny

ADR Mixer
Kimberly Lambert

ADR Mixer
Mark Seagraves

ADR Mixer
Jim Brookshire

ADR Mixer
Alison Fisher

ADR Mixer
Darrell Hanzalik

ADR Mixer
Mary Ruth Smith

ADR Mixer
Jeff Watts

ADR Mixer
Jeff Payne

ADR Mixer
Steve Dutkovich

ADR Mixer
Production Sound Mixer

ADR Mixer
David Kelson

ADR Mixer
Tom Winslow

ADR Mixer
Charleen Richards

ADR Mixer
ADR Recordist

ADR Mixer
Greg Steele

ADR Mixer
Foley Mixer

ADR Mixer
David Jobe

ADR Mixer
Foley Recordist

ADR Mixer
Don Givens

ADR Mixer
Sound Re-recordists

ADR Mixer
Matthew Iadarola

ADR Mixer
Gary Gegan

ADR Mixer
Sound Effects Supervisor

ADR Mixer
Joel R. Valentine

ADR Mixer
Sound Effects Editor

ADR Mixer
Fred Cipriano

ADR Mixer
Foley Artists

ADR Mixer
Alicia Stevenson

ADR Mixer
Zane Bruce

ADR Mixer
Cast

ADR Mixer
Whoopi Goldberg

ADR Mixer
Corrina Washington

ADR Mixer
Ray Liotta

ADR Mixer
Manny Singer

ADR Mixer
Tina Majorino

ADR Mixer
Molly Singer

ADR Mixer
Wendy Crewson

ADR Mixer
Jenny Davis

ADR Mixer
Larry Miller

ADR Mixer
Sid

ADR Mixer
Erica Yohn

ADR Mixer
Grandma Eva

ADR Mixer
Jennifer Lewis

ADR Mixer
Jevina

Courtland Mead
Howard

Asher Metchik
Lewis

Don Ameche
Grandpa Harry

Noreen Hennessy
High Heels

June C. Ellis
Miss O'Herlihy

Mimi Lieber
Rita Lang

Karen Leigh Hopkins
Lila Sheffield

Lin Shaye
Repeat Nanny

Pearl Huang
Mrs Wang

Marcus Toji
Tommy

Louis Mustillo
Joe Allechinetti

Don Pugsley
Sean Moran

Sean Moran
Delivery Men

Lynette Walden
Annie

Brent Spiner
Brent Witherspoon

Bryan Gordon
Business Associate

Jevetta Steele
Club Singer

Yonda Davis
Woman in Audience

Curtis Williams
Percy

Briahna Odom
Lizzie

Ashley Taylor Walls
Mavis

Sue Carlton
Mrs Werner

Tommy Bertelsen
Bratty Boy

Kyle Orsi
Gregory

Maud Winchester
Mrs Rodgers

K.T. Stevens
Mrs Morgan

Chris Chisholm
John Brennan

John Brennan
Chubby Boy

Bryan A. Robinson
Roz Witt

Chubby Boy
Mrs Murphy

10,400 feet
116 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour

Prints by
Film House

Los Angeles, 1959. At her mother's funeral, seven-year-old Molly Singer sits under a table listening as people express their sympathies to her father Manny. Molly hasn't spoken a word since her mother died, and Manny is left with the task of finding a suitable housekeeper to look after his daughter so that he can return to his job as a jingle writer. After seeing a series of unsuitable candidates, Manny interviews Corrina for the job. She has

a college degree and is clearly overqualified, but when he sees how she handles Molly, Manny hires her.

A few days later, Molly speaks to Corrina for the first time. Manny is elated when he comes home and learns his daughter can talk and, realising Corrina is responsible, he invites her to dinner. Molly begins school, but hates her first day. She begs Corrina to let her stay home, so Corrina takes her along on cleaning jobs. At home in the evening Manny cooks for his housekeeper and his daughter, and Molly happily believes that the three of them have become a family.

Meanwhile, Manny's boss is trying to pair him off with Jenny, an eligible divorcee. When Jenny arrives unexpectedly to visit Manny, she treats Corrina as a servant, causing her to leave. Disturbed that this woman may come between her father and Corrina, Molly successfully sabotages their evening. The next day, Corrina hands in her notice. Manny begs her to stay and she agrees. He kisses her - surprising both of them and a neighbour watching nearby. The neighbour tells Manny's parents, and Manny is sickened by everyone's attitude, insisting Corrina is the best thing for Molly. Manny and Corrina become closer than ever and kiss one evening in the park, noticing that Molly is watching.

When Manny discovers Corrina has been keeping Molly away from school, he sacks her for betraying him. Molly retreats into silence and is further disturbed when Manny's father dies. After the funeral, Manny goes to see Corrina to apologise. At first she rebukes him, but touched by his awkwardness, she embraces him. She takes him inside so he can meet her own family. The pair then return to Molly, who is comforting her grandmother with a gospel song Corrina has taught her. Molly smiles and stops singing when she sees Manny and Corrina walk up the path hand in hand.

Inter-racial relationships have been the backdrop for a series of recent mainstream movies, including

◀ between Ray Liotta's Manny and Whoopi Goldberg's Corrina as part of a larger story, and in doing so effectively and subtly depicts much more about such an affair.

Corrina, Corrina focuses on the relationship between a distraught child and the housekeeper who looks after her. It is the directorial debut of writer-director-producer Jessie Nelson, and is loosely based on the director's own experiences of the 35 nannies who came and went in her household after her mother died. Both the relationship between Corrina and the child Molly – played superbly by young actress Tina Majorino – and Molly's coming to terms with her bereavement are believable and understated, and there are surprisingly few of the mandatory sugar-sweet scenes.

The biggest surprises are in the casting. Both Liotta and Goldberg are rarely seen in this kind of low-key project – although Liotta has given subtle performances in films such as *Nicky and Gino* and *Field of Dreams* – and the director has successfully reined in their personalities so that the child is not overwhelmed by the more experienced actors. Goldberg, who usually whirls across the screen in a comic frenzy, still manages to crack a few jokes but is remarkably restrained as the nanny-with-the-heart-of-gold.

There are comic moments to be had, courtesy of Joan Cusack as Jonesy, a demented interviewee for the housekeeping position who tells Manny that, since she does everything a wife does around the house, she should get everything a wife gets. In fact, Manny's prospective employees are such a diverse bunch – one thinks she's Sophia Loren in *Houseboat*, while the male candidate for the position considers himself a "kid-magnet" – it makes one wonder just what Manny said in his advert for the job.

While the comedy is often light and effective, the relationship between father and child as they grieve could sustain the film on its own. Director Nelson adds the element of a black housekeeper to the mix, using her appearance as a tool to look at the way attitudes back in 1959 were not that different from those of today. Manny's parents and neighbours disapprove of his growing friendship with a black woman, and her struggle to rise above her "position" despite having a college degree is depicted without the audience being subjected to a lecture on rights issues. Yes, *Corrina* is humiliated in a restaurant when another diner assumes she is a waitress, and yes, she cannot get her written work about black singers published in mainstream journals, but the dogged Corrina sees this as how life is, and believes that no matter how much she wants to change things, this will not happen overnight.

In less than two hours, the audience not only learns something about Manny, Corrina and Molly, it learns something from them – and that is what makes *Corrina, Corrina* worthwhile.

Joanna Berry

Crooklyn

USA 1994

Director: Spike Lee

Certificate

12

Distributor

Electric Triangle

Production Company

40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks
In association with
Child Hoods
Productions

Executive Producer

Jon Kilik

Producer

Spike Lee

Co-producer

Monty Ross

Associate Producers

Joie Susannah Lee
Cinqué Lee

Production Supervisor

Preston L. Holmes

Production Co-ordinator

Caryn Campbell

Location Managers

Nancy L. Roth
Albert E. Valentine

Assistant Directors

Michael Ellis
Tracey L. Hinds

Casting

Robi Reed

Associate:

Aisha Coley

Screenplay

Joie Susannah Lee

Cinqué Lee

Spike Lee

Story

Joie Susannah Lee

Script Supervisor

Shari L. Carpenter

Director of Photography

Arthur Jafa

Camera Operator

Gearey McLeod

Steadicam Operators

Anastas N. Michos
Rick Raphael

Editor

Barry Alexander Brown

Production Designer

Wynn Thomas

Art Director

Chris Shriver

Set Decorator

Ted Glass

Set Dressers

Gary Aharoni

Anthony J. DiMeo

Philip Canfield

Deborah A. Dreyer

John W. Farraday

Robert Feltman

Howard Goldstein

Steve Krieger

Jeffrey Rollins

James P. Sherman

Michael Leather

Harriet Zucker

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Steve Kirshoff

Costume Design

Ruth E. Carter

Associate Costume

Designer

Donna M. Berwick

Wardrobe Supervisor

Jane E. Myers

Winsome G. McKay

Ellen Ellis Lee

Make-up

Key:

Alvechia Ewing

Diane Hammond

Hair stylist

Key:

Larry M. Cherry

Mary Cooke

Title Design

Balsmeyer & Everett

Music

Terence Blanchard

Music Performed by

The Crooklyn Orchestra

Music Conductor

Terence Blanchard

Music Supervisor

Alex Steyermark

Associate Music Editor

James Flatto

Songs/Music Extracts

"People Make the

World Go Round"

by Thom Bell, Linda

Creed, "I'm Stone in

Love with You" by

Anthony Bell, Thom

Bell, Linda Creed,

performed by The

Stylistics; "It's not

Unusual" by Gordon

Mills, Les Reed;

"Release Me" by

Robert Yount, Eddie

Miller, Dub Williams;

"Signed, Sealed,

Delivered I'm Yours"

by Stevie Wonder,

Syretta Wright, Lee

Garrett, Lula Mae

Hardaway, performed

by Stevie Wonder;

"Snagglepuss Song"

by Joseph Barbera,

William Hanna, Sylvia

Parnes; "Pusherman"

by and performed by

Curtis Mayfield;

"Everyday People,"

"Everybody is a Star"

by Sylvester Stewart,

performed by Sly and

the Family Stone;

"Respect Yourself"

by Mack Rice, Luther

Ingram, "I'll Take You

There" by Alvertis

Isbell, performed by

The Staple Singers;

"El Pito (I'll Never Go

Back to Georgia)" by

Jami Sabater, Joe Cuba,

performed by Joe Cuba;

"Hey Joe" by Billy

Roberts, performed

by The Jimi Hendrix

Experience; "I Woke

Up in Love This

Morning" by Lawrence

Russell Brown, Irwin

Levine, performed by

The Partridge Family;

"Puerto Rico" by Eddie

Palmieri, Ismael

Quintana, performed

by Eddie Palmieri;

"Thin Line Between

Love and Hate" by

Robert Poindexter,

Richard Poindexter,

Jackie Members,

performed by The

Persuaders; "Mr Big

Stuff" by J. Broussard,

R. Williams, C.

Washington, performed

by Jean Knight;

"Soul Power" by and

performed by James

Brown; "Soul Makossa"

by and performed by

Manu Dibango; "Pass

the Peas" by John

Starks, James Brown,

Charles Fred Bobbitt,

performed by The

J. B.s; "Bra" by Patrick

Patterson, Steve Scipio,

performed by

Cymande; "Time Has

Come Today" by Joseph

Chambers, Willie

Chambers, performed

by The Chambers

Brothers; "I Can See

Clearly Now" by and

performed by Johnny

Nash; "The Tears of

a Clown" by Stevie

Wonder, William

"Smokey" Robinson,

Henry Cosby,

performed by Smokey Robinson and the Miracles; "La La (Means I Love You)" by William Hart, Thom Bell, performed by The Delfonics; "ABC" by Alphonso Mizell, Freddie Perren, Deke Richard, Berry Gordy, "Never Can Say Goodbye" by Clifton Davis, performed by The Jackson 5; "Oh Girl" by Eugene Record, performed by the Chi-lites; "Rock Steady" by and performed by Aretha Franklin; "Ooh Child" by Stan Vincent, performed by The Five Stairsteps; "Theme from 'Shaft'" by and performed by Isaac Hayes; "Ain't no Sunshine" by and performed by Bill Withers; "Mighty Love" by Joseph Jefferson, Bruce Hawes, Charles Simmons, performed by The Spinners; "Hot Potato" by Curtis Ousley, performed by The Rinky Dinks; "Crooklyn" by Edward Archer, Kenyatta Blake, Duval Clear, John Davis, Ali Shaheed Muhammed, performed by The Crooklyn Dodgers; "Wantu Wazuri Use Afro-Sheen" by Donny Hathaway, Vince Cutlers Advertising, performed by Donny Hathaway, Eulaulah Hathaway; "Join the Pepsi People Feeling Free" by Ellen Starr Wiland; "Let Yourself Go With Cheerios"; "Quick Draw McGraw Music" by Chandler-Williams

Sound Design

Skip Lievsay

Dialogue Supervisor

Philip Stockton

Dialogue Editors

Robert Hein

Fred Rosenberg

Foley Supervisor

Bruce Pross

ADR Editors

Marissa Littlefield

Hal Levinsohn

Foley Editors

Frank Kern

Eliza Paley

Steven Visscher

Sound Mixer

Rolf Pardula

Music Recordists

James Nichols

Richard Clarke

Re-recording Mixer

Tom Fleischman

Sound Effects Editor

Eugene Gearty

Sound Effects Recordist

Andy Aaron

Sound Effects Co-ordinator

Steve Kirshoff

Foley Artist

Marko Costanzo

DTS Consultant

Jeff Levison

Stunt Co-ordinator

Jeff Ward

Animal Trainer

John Baldwin

Cast

Alfre Woodard

Carolyn Carmichael

Delroy Lindo

Woody Carmichael

David Patrick Kelly

Tony Eyes

Zelda Harris

Troy

Carlton Williams

Clinton

Sharif Rashed

Wendell

Tse-Mach Washington

Joseph

Christopher Knowings

Nate

José Zuniga

Tommy La La

Isaiah Washington

Vic

Ivelka Reyes

Jessica

Spike Lee

Snuffy

N. Jeremi Duru

Right Hand Man

Frances Foster

Aunt Song

Norman Matlock

Clem

Patrice Nelson

Viola

Joie Susannah Lee

Aunt Maxine

Vondie Curtis-Hall

Uncle Brown

Tiasha Reyes

Minnie

Raymond Reliford

Possom (George)

Harvey Williams



Where the heart is: **Alfre Woodard**

Crooklyn is Lee's most personal work since his startling debut eight years ago with *She's Gotta Have It*, and decidedly his best to date. The semi-autobiographical film, which Lee co-wrote with his sister Joie and younger brother Cinqué, traces the emotional arc of the fictional Carmichael family over a few crucial months during the early 70s, a sentimental interlude that closes in tragedy. Amy Taubin has called the film "operatic," and it's not for nothing that in one scene the clan's patriarch and resident tortured artist Woody proclaims that he's writing a folk opera. Some 20 years after the fact, Lee has done just that.

Woody is a purist under siege. A composer and jazz musician, he's pressured by his wife Carolyn to compromise his art to put food on the table. Although clearly adoring, Carolyn is weary of playing the heavy for both her kids and husband. When Woody complains about her lack of support (he's just bounced his fifth cheque of the month), she reacts with fury, storming, "I can't even take a piss without six people hanging off my tits," and pointedly counting him into the equation.

Bristling with passion, Carolyn is by turns nurturing and punishing, a woman whose frustrations with her family are tempered by overwhelming love. She's also Lee's most complicated female character since his first feature, and her eventual departure goes a long way toward explaining the general failings of his other cinematic women. While Woody sneaks the kids sweets and spins out promises, Carolyn is the one who rises at dawn, conjures the meals, and does time from nine to five. Tougher than Woody, and demonstrably less sympathetic, she's the only parent who's keeping it together.

For all that *Crooklyn* is a family melodrama, nearly as much time is devoted to the outside action as that rolling about inside the Carmichael brownstone. Lee launches his film with one of his characteristic flourishes, the camera sweeping over a riot of sounds and images, rushing to keep pace with all the children running, jumping and hurtling through these less than mean

streets. This is Brooklyn as it used to be, a place where gossiping neighbours outnumber jiving glue sniffers, and racial unease simmers but rarely burns. More to the point, this is Brooklyn as remembered by its children.

One of the remarkable things about this remarkable film is that much of it is seen through the eyes of a nine-year-old African American girl. Troy is both the film's conduit and its wellspring, the one for whom the world either slows down to a sensuous crawl, or squeezes together for a surreal kink. Devoted to her mother, enamoured with her daddy, Troy's gender makes her an outsider within the litter as well as, the script suggests, a keener witness to the family romance. For all that the boys of the Carmichael Five struggle to rock their world, it's Troy who signifies the loudest.

Shaped more by sensation than by narrative thrust, *Crooklyn* unfolds through a succession of shifting scenes, some little more than snapshots. With one striking exception (Troy's trip south, a sequence lasting roughly 20 minutes and related entirely through the use of an anamorphic lens), the mood is familiar, intimate, soulful. Arthur Jafa's camera keeps close to characters but doesn't crowd them, while the extraordinary soundtrack, as lush as that in *GoodFellas*, eases everyone on their way.

The original definition of melodrama is drama with music, and there's scarcely a moment in *Crooklyn* that isn't punctuated by either Terence Blanchard's plangent score or the wild style of over three dozen hot licks, pop hits, ballads, lamentations and sundry witless ditties. As much as the dialogue or lighting, it's music that shapes the film, filling in texture and building density. From Curtis Mayfield to the Partridge Family, the Carmichaels are awash in music, a fact that has as much to do with Woody's calling as with the cultural moment in which the director himself came of age. Long before he found his voice in film, Lee had discovered the pulse and pleasures of Brooklyn, New York.

Manohla Dargis

Dream Lover

USA 1993

Director: **Nicholas Kazan**

Certificate

18

Distributor

Rank

Production Company

PolyGram Filmed Entertainment presents
A Propaganda Films production
In association with Nicita/Lloyd productions
Edward R. Pressman productions

Executive Producers

Steve Golin
Edward R. Pressman

Supervising Producer

Tim Clawson

Producers

Sigurjon Sighvatsson

Wallis Nicita

Lauren Lloyd

Co-producer

Elon Dershowitz

Production Co-ordinator

Cindy Bernstein

Unit Production Manager

Louis G. Friedman

Location Manager

Paul Hargrave

Post-production Supervisors

Scott Carleton

Diana Seel

Post-production Co-ordinators

Scott Biddle

Darci Rose

Assistant Directors

Mary Ellen Woods

Elizabeth Ryan

Margie Sperling

Casting

Johanna Ray

Co-ordinator:

Lesa Shapiro

ADR Voice:

Barbara Harris

Screenplay

Nicholas Kazan

Script Supervisor

Jane Hull-Page

Director of Photography

Jean-Yves Escoffier

Steadicam Operator

David Emmerichs

Opticals

The Post Group

Editors

Susan Crutcher

Jill Savitt

Production Designer

Richard Hoover

Art Director

Bruce Hill

Set Decorator

Brian Kasch

Set Dresser

Jenny Baum

Scenic Artist

Dave Robinson

Special Effects Supervisor

Michael Schorr

Special Effects

Special Effects

Unlimited

Costume Design

Barbara T'fank

Costume Supervisor

P. Kay Morris

Make-up

Carmen Willis

Hairstylist

Lori Guidroz

Titles/Opticals

Howard A.

Anderson Co.

Music

Christopher Young

Synthesiser/Electronic

Percussion

performed by

Mark Zimoski

Orchestrations

Christopher Young

Pete Anthony

Music Supervisors

Sharon Boyle

Evyen Klean

Paul Broucek

Music Editor

John LaSalandra

Music Co-ordinator

Carol Sue Baker

Songs/Music Extracts

"Just You" by Kathy

Fisher, Ron Wasser-

man, performed by

Kathy Fisher; "The

Other Side" by and

performed by Kevin

Welch; "Don't Give It

Up", "Mama, Mama"

by Vincent Taylor,

performed by JAH

Messengers

Choreography

Michael Darrin

Sound Design

Victor Iorillo

Gordon Ecker

Supervising Sound Editor

Anthony R. Milch

Sound Editors

Bob Bradshaw

John Kwiatkowski

Joe Holsen

Connie Kazmer

Greg Stacy

ADR Editor

Jeff Watts

Production Sound

David Brownlow

Mary Jo Devenney

Sound Recordist

Larry Hoki

Music Mixer

Rick Winquest

ADR Mixer

J. R. Western

ADR Recordist

Joe Bosco

Foley Mixer

Ron Bedrosian

Foley Recordist

Frank Flemming

Dolby Consultant

Thom Ehle

Supervising Sound

Re-recording Mixer

Jeffrey Perkin

Sound Re-recording Mixer

Kurt Kassulke

Sound Co-ordinators

Blake Marion

John Fanaris

Sound Transfers

Gary Bluffer

John Davis

Foley Artists

Joanie Rowe

Katie Rowe

Stunt Co-ordinator

James "Obbe" Oberman

Cast

James Spader

Ray Reardon

Mädchen Amick

Lena Reardon

Fredric Lehne

Larry

Bess Armstrong

Elaine

Larry Miller

Norman

Kathleen York

Martha

Kate Williamson

Mrs Sneider

Tom Lillard

Mr Sneider

William Shockley

Buddy

Carl Sundstrom

Irwin Keyes

Officers

Joel McKinnon Miller

Minister

Joseph Scorsiani

Martha's Lawyer

Archie Lang

Clyde Kusatsu

Judges

Alexander Folk

Oscar

Michael Chow

Mr Mura

Talya Ferro

Cora's Sister

Sandra Kinder

Beautician

Peter Zapp

Ticket Taker

Armando Pucci

Bernardo

Janel Moloney

Alice

Jeanne Bates

Jeanne

Shawne Rowe

Debby

Robert David Hall

Dr Sheen

Scott Coffey

Billy

Lucy Butler

Ray's Secretary

Gretchen Becker

Celine Rogers

Harriet Leider

Carnival Woman

Blair Tefkin

Cheryl

Paul Ben Victor

Clown

Ava DuFree

Check-out Woman

Erick Avari

Dr Spatz

Michael Milhoan

Ray's Lawyer

Eleanor Zee

Nurse

Cassie Cole

Tina, age 6 years

Timothy Johnston

Bob, age 4 years

9,288 feet

103 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

DeLuxe

Successful yuppie Ray Reardon is beset by dreams in which a booth advertising "The Girl of Your Dreams" taunts his romantic unhappiness. In court, Ray negotiates a divorce settlement with his wife, with whom relationships have broken down. At work, Ray's friends attempt to find him a new suitable companion, but Ray remains distracted by dreams of meeting his perfect partner. A chance encounter with sophisticated, beauty Lena Mathers leads to the snaring of Ray's affections. The couple court and are swiftly married, take up residence in Ray's exotic apartment, and start a family.

As time progresses, Ray begins to doubt the credibility of his wife's alleged past. When her credit card bill arrives at his office, Ray uncovers regular appointments at a local hotel, and accuses Lena of adultery with his friend Larry. In the ensuing argument, Ray (who now doubts even his fatherhood of his own children) strikes Lena. Later, a badly bruised Lena (whose injuries are wholly disproportionate to her confrontation with Ray) charges her husband with assault. Ray traces Lena's true past to a backwater town where her devious reputation and abusive former partner are renowned. At a judicial hearing, Ray is unable to control his frustration, and is deemed mentally unstable. Lena wins from Ray possession of his house and children, driving Ray to further extremes. The court orders him to be placed in compulsory psychiatric care. Some time later, Lena visits Ray at the psychiatric home in which he is incarcerated. Asking her to walk with him in the gardens, Ray praises Lena's portrayal of him as a madman before strangling her - since he has been deemed insane, he will evade prosecution for murder.

Writer/director Nicholas Kazan attributes the inception of this chaotically quirky shambles to an incident at a dinner party at which "my wife said something very strange, very unlike herself, and just for that instant, her face was turned and she didn't look like herself - she seemed like a complete stranger." From this single mundane but uncanny incident flows an elaborate fantasy which raises questions of how much we ever ►

◀ really know about our loved ones, and how much we merely project onto them our own aspirations. As the writer of *At Close Range*, *Frances* and *Reversal of Fortune* (as well as 'script doctor' on Rowdy Herrington's excellent but underrated *Gladiator*), Kazan should have been more than able to take this fertile premise, brim full of paranoid promise, and tease from it a script of structural elegance and psychological depth. Sadly, what he has produced is, like Ray and Lena's marriage, merely an unstable union of warring elements which soon reach implosive critical mass.

The most glaring problem is one of overstatement; Kazan describes Nick's torment as "an exaggeration" of the fate of those who seek perfection, but as any genuine paranoiac knows, such exaggeration brings with it emotional release rather than involvement. It is the little details (Lena's occasional uneasy smiles) and the constant suspicion, rather than knowledge, of conspiracy which bear the frisson of emotional reality. Once it becomes apparent, about 30 minutes into the movie, that Lena is little more than a pathological fraud, our interest in her deception dissolves. From then on, the increasingly bizarre catalogue of revelations about Lena's behaviour remains intriguing only on the level of a hokey 'Tale of the Unexpected': will Kazan pull a clever concluding explanation from the hat, to turn what we have seen on its head and prove Lena the perfect wife after all? (Answer: No.) By the time we reach the final showdown, intrigue has turned to exasperation, understatement to hyperbole, and black comedy to farce.

Perhaps another director would have fared better with this material, which clearly suffers from having been both written and directed by the same person. Certainly, any second reader worth their mettle would have swiftly excised the cringe-worthy dream sequences which serve only to undercut the psychological reality into which Kazan hopes to tap. On the positive side, Frost/Lynch graduates James Spader and Mädchen Amick are well cast, and our knowledge of their earlier screen and TV work helps to establish their characters with the minimum fuss. Amick in particular benefits in this respect; like Lara Flynn Boyle, her former life as a resident of *Twin Peaks* has forever lent her face an air of mystery and intrigue which she uses to full effect. Spader, on the other hand, re-plays the 'slimy yuppie' role to which his drawling voice and college-boy haircut seem to have consigned him permanently, but which seems never to wear thin (he recently essayed the same role alongside Nicholson and Pfeiffer in *Wolf*, where he more than held his own ground). With such potential in terms of concept, casting, and scriptwriter, it's a genuine shame that the most disturbing aspect of *Dream Lover* is its resolute failure to succeed as the sexy psychological thriller it was so clearly destined to be.

Mark Kermode

Final Combination

USA 1993

Director: Nigel Dick

Certificate

18

Distributor

Rank

Production Company

PolyGram Filmed Entertainment present
A Propaganda Films production

Executive Producers

Gary Milkins
Sigurjon Sighvatsson

Producers

Steve Golin
Gregg Fienberg

Executive in Charge of Production

Tim Clawson

Line Producer

Gregory Goodman

Associate Producers

Johanna Ray
Lynn Weimer
Production Co-ordinator
Wendy Cox

Production Manager

Gregory Cundiff

Location Manager

Julie Duvic

Post-production Co-ordinators

Scott Carleton
Diana Seel

2nd Unit Director

Dan Bradley

Assistant Directors

Thomas Patrick Smith
Suzanne L. Haasis
Edward Kalpa

Casting

Johanna Ray
Associate:
Elaine J. Huzzar

ADR Voice:

Barbara Harris

Screenplay

Larry Golin

Story

Jonathan Tydor

Script Supervisor

Lynn Harris

Director of Photography

David Bridges

Additional Photography

Tom "Frisby" Fraser

Steadicam Operator

Bruce Alab Greene

Editors

Henry Richardson
Jonathan Shaw

Production Designer

Gary Steele

Art Director

Douglas James Hall

Set Decorator

Nancy Arnold

Set Dresser

Christopher Turman

Scenic Artist

Amanda J. Flick

Storyboard Artist

Matt Golden

Special Effects Supervisor

Mike Schorr

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Martin Bresin

Costume Design

Alexandra Welker

Wardrobe Supervisor

Susan Michalek

Make-up

Michelle Buhler

Special Make-up Effects

Thomas E. Surprenant

Hairstylist

Scott Williams

Title Design

Howard A. Anderson Co.

Music

Rolfe Kent

Orchestrations

Tony Blondal

Music Editor

John LaSalandra

Songs

"You Got What It Takes" by Paul Disley,
Nick Kenny, Simon Kenny, Andy Shaw,
Charlie Francis,
performed by 2 Die 4;

"Sound of a Breaking Heart" by Andy Murray,
Nigel Dick,
"Bad Boy" by Nigel King,
performed by The Transatlantic Rhythm Kings;

"Dick's Blues" by John Ciambotti, Nigel Dick,
Rolfte Kent, performed by John Ciambotti and The Rolfte Kent Allstars;

"Surfin' in Kilburn,"
"No Two Bit Judge" by Nigel Dick, "The Future Mrs. Smith" by Nigel Dick, Jace Smith,
performed by Mojo Wurken; "Man to Man" by Nigel Dick,
performed by The Transatlantic Rhythm Kings, Buck McCain;

"Now is the Time" by Rolfte Kent, Nigel Dick,
performed by Angela Mary McCluskey

Supervising Sound Editor

David E. Eichhorn

Sound Editors

Bill Bell

Stuart Calderon

Bob Costanza

Rick Crampton

Mike Dickeson

Scott Eilers

Gary Macheel

David Marshall

Vic Radulich

Mark Steele

Rick Steele

Tim Terusa

Rusty Tinsley

ADR Editor

Kirsti Johns

Sound Mixers

Jim Stuebe

Music:

Greg Townley

ADR Mixers

Ron Bedrosian

Richard Rogers

Foley Mixer

Bruce Bell

Foley Recordist

Jim Meier

Dolby Consultants

Daniel W. Victor, Jr

Brian Slack

Sound Re-recordists

Robert W. Glass

Richard Rogers

Foley Artists

Tim Chilton

Jill Schacine

Police Technical Advisers

"Call the Cops"

Stunt Co-ordinator

Dan Bradley

Cast

Michael Madsen

Detective Matt Dickson

Lisa Bonet

Catherine Briggs

Gary Stretch

Richard Welton

Tim Russ

Detective Chuck Rowland

Damian Chapa

Donato

Carmen Argenziano

Lieutenant Stein

Clarence Landry

Ike "Point Man" Pointer

Susan Byun

Sarah

Alan Toy

Art Robinson

Shawn Huff

Newscaster

Connie Blankenship

Terry

Jimmy Ortega

Vince

John Clayton Schafer

Jeff

Parker Posey

Denise

Shawne Rowe

Nicky

Ernesto Hernandez

Tito

Sushil Tyagi

Westview Owner

Erin Chandler

Young Mother

Eric DaRe

Bouncer

Alex Desir

Bald Man

Paul Leslie Disley

Simon Kenny

Nicholas Kenny

Andrew Shaw

2 Die 4

Curt Smith

Desk Clerk

Sonny Mascara

Gym Regular

Thunderwolf

Huge Fighter

Julio Oscar Mechoso

Linen Suit

John Apicella

Mr Sanders

Joan Foley

Mrs Sanders

Brenda Swanson

Susan

Rick Marotta

Club Owner

Ernie Lee Banks

Sammy Simons

Frank Collison

Garage Attendant

Carl Mueller

John Robert Clark

Uniform Officers

Clark Brolly

EMS Attendant

Dr John Ciambotti

Bass Player

Ava DuPree

Police Officer

Lisa Sinclair

Doreen

Ben Bray

Tito's Student

8,367 feet

93 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Foto-Kem

Los Angeles. Richard Welton, a skilled boxer, lures two girls to his motel room, where he kills and rapes them. Detective Matt Dickson is approached by Catherine, who claims to be a journalist following the case. Checking out her information, Dickson is convinced that he is on the track of a serial killer who habitually registers at motels under the name of a famous boxer and telephones a sex line during his murders.

Dickson, an inveterate womaniser, begins a relationship with Catherine. On a hunch, he trails around the city's gyms and discovers that a man fitting the suspect's description has left a sports bag at one of them after being thrown out for unnecessary brutality.

This leads Dickson to a motel where he finds Welton about to kill a girl. He attempts an arrest, but Welton gets away, stealing Dickson's badge and wallet, and convincing the girl to come with him. Catherine, who has been tailing Dickson, shoots at Welton but misses, and Dickson discovers that she is the vengeance-seeking sister of another victim. Welton calls Dickson to announce that he has killed the girl from the motel, and a phone trace reveals that he has committed the murder in Dickson's apartment. Challenging Dickson, Welton leads the cop in a car chase and plunges off a pier, apparently to his death. However, the killer later returns to Dickson's apartment to menace Catherine. Dickson gets home and defeats the murderer in a fist fight.

Final Combination – a cryptic title presumably intended as a sports reference – attempts some reasonably intricate if elementary parallels, presenting a cop and killer with much in common. Both are burned-out jocks (Dickson is a former hockey player, Welton an ex-Royal Navy boxing champion) who pick up, use and discard women. Despite the shambling presence of Michael Madsen, and because of the casting of weirdly-accented British boxer Gary Stretch, this is an entirely ordinary serial-killer thriller of the type usually destined for rental premiere video. With its consistently ridiculous plot, trite characters and lumpy dialogue, without even the saving grace of being thoroughly lurid, it is an entirely superfluous film. A more honest exploitation movie would have combined the roles of vengeance-seeking sister and hard-bitten cop and given both roles to Cynthia Rothrock.

Kim Newman



Punch drunk: Lisa Bonet, Michael Madsen

Flesh and Bone

USA 1993

Director: Steve Kloves

Certificate

15
Distributor
 UIP
Production Company
 Mirage/Spring Creek
Executive Producer
 Sydney Pollack
Producers
 Mark Rosenberg
 Paula Weinstein
Co-producer
 G. Mac Brown
Production Associate
 Edward A. Joffreda
Production Co-ordinator
 Mari Jo Winkler
Unit Production Manager
 G. Mac Brown
Location Manager
 Andrew D. Cooke
Post-production Supervisor
 Sara Romilly
Assistant Directors
 Cara Giallanza
 Marge Piane
Casting
 Risa Bramon-Garcia
 Juel Bestrop
 Voice Casting:
 Barbara Harris
Screenplay
 Steve Kloves
Script Supervisor
 Valerie E. Norman
Director of Photography
 Philippe Rousselot
Camera Operator
 Anastas N. Michos
Editor
 Mia Goldman
Production Designer
 Jon Hutman
Art Director
 Charles Breen
Set Decorator
 Samara Schaffer
Set Dressers
 Key:
 John D. Kretschmer
 Marcus Lee Brown
 Jerry King
 Shane Patrick
 J.P. Schwan
 Joe Self
 Lisa K. Sessions
Storyboard Artist
 Mark Lambert Bristol
Costume Design
 Elizabeth McBride
Make-up
 Leonard Engelman
 Dorothy J. Pearl
Hairstylist
 Colleen Callaghan
Title Design
 Nina Saxon Film Design
Titles/Opticals
 Pacific Title
Music
 Thomas Newman
Music Preparation
 Julian Bratolyubov
Orchestrations
 Thomas Pasatieri
Music Editor
 Bill Bernstein
Songs/Music Extracts
 "Music from 'The Untouchables'", by Nelson Riddle, William Loose, Jack Cookerly, Emil Cadkin; "Sometimes You Just Can't Win" by Smoke Stover, performed by George Jones; "Papa Come Quick (Jody & Chico)" by Billy Vera, Rick Hirsch, Chip Taylor, performed by Gwyneth Paltrow; "Bad to the Bone" by George Thorogood, performed by George Thorogood & the

Destroyers; "Lilita" by Bill Bernstein, performed by Desert Star Boys; "Stardust" by Hoagy Carmichael, Mitchell Parish, performed by Willie Nelson; "Blue Moon" by Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart; "Blue Moon Revisited" by Margo Timmins, Michael Timmins, performed by The Cowboy Junkies
Supervising Sound Editor
 Scott Hecker
Supervising ADR Editor
 Joe Dorn
Supervising Foley Editor
 David Arnold
ADR Mixer
 Brian Ruberg
Foley Mixer
 Dean Drabin
Sound Mixer
 Danny Michael
Music Scoring Mixer
 John Vigran
Dolby stereo consultant
 Steve Smith
Sound Re-recording Mixers
 Andy Nelson
 Steve Pederson
Sound Recordists
 Andrea Lakin
 Sam Kaufman
 Annie Hadsell
 Joan Chamberlain
Sound Effects Supervisor
 Randy E. Moore
Sound Effects Co-ordinator
 Margaret Johnson
Sound Effects Editors
 Joe Earle
 Bruce Tanis
 Chris Flick
 Simon Coke
Dialogue Editors
 Ralph Osborn
 Adam Sawelson
 Gary Lewis
 Pat McCormick
Foley Artists
 Sarah Jacobs
 Robin Harlan
Stunt Co-ordinator
 Andy Armstrong

Cast
 Dennis Quaid
 Arlis Sweeney
 James Caan
 Roy Sweeney
 Meg Ryan
 Kay Davies
 Gwyneth Paltrow
 Ginnie
 Scott Wilson
 Elliot
 Christopher Rydell
 Reese Davies
 Julia Mueller
 Sarah Willets
 Ron Kuhlman
 Clem Willets
 Jerry Swindall
 Young Arlis
 Ryan Bohls
 Scotty Willets
 Barbara Alyn Woods
 Cindy
 James N. Harrell
 Woody
 Gerardo Johnson
 Juan
 Hector Garcia
 Nestor
 Betsy Brantley
 Peg
 John Hawkes
 Groom
 Vic Polizzo
 Pudge Riley
 Nik Hagler
 Earl
 Joe Stevens
 Kyle

Gail Cronauer
 Emma
 Ex Perez
 Boy in Suit
 Craig Erickson
 Tiny Ted
 Joe Berryman
 Plump Man
 Travis Baker
 Sullen Kid
 Libby Villari
 Waitress
 Joe Berryman
 Plump Man

Angie Bolling
 Woman With Crying Baby
 11,372 feet
 126 minutes
 Dolby stereo
 In colour
 Prints by
 Deluxe

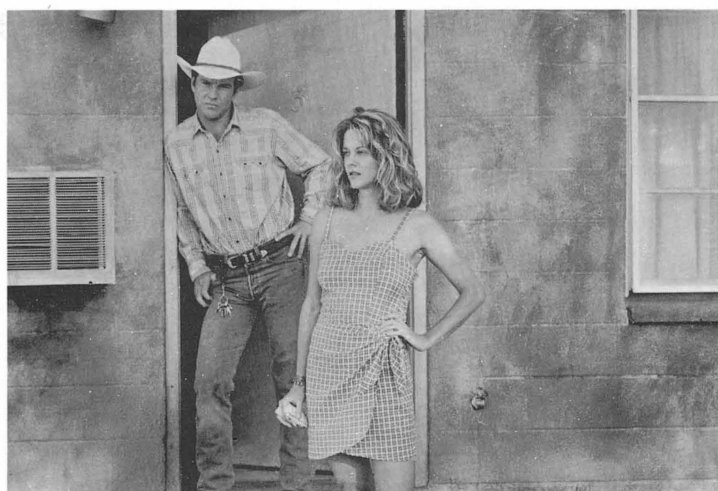
One dark night, a Texan couple, living on a remote farmhouse with their son and baby daughter, take in a strange boy who says he is lost. The boy has a star tattooed onto his temple. When they are asleep, he lets in his father, and the two set about burgling the house. They are interrupted by the farmer, but the intruder shoots the whole family, except the baby, dead.

Thirty years later, Arlis Sweeney, who runs novelty and vending machines, drives into a roadside bar/shop. He sees a young woman steal from the shop; later, he keeps glimpsing her around. In the local church, the woman steals jewellery from the corpse that has been laid out for the family. Then, on a bus out of town, she steals money from a woman lying asleep next to her. That night, Arlis goes into a diner, where a stag night is being held, to pick up his vending machine takings. A stripper comes out of a wedding cake, and collapses, drunk. He takes her back to his motel and puts her to bed. The next morning, the stripper, Kay, explains that she was only stripping because her money had been stolen on the coach. Arlis takes her home. Her loudmouth husband Reese turns up and, accusing Kay of sleeping with Arlis, hits her in the face; she turns the tables by putting a gun to his head. She packs her bags and leaves with Arlis, travelling around with him on his jobs and staying with him in motels. Soon they become lovers. Kay notices that Arlis has a star tattooed on his forehead.

One night, Arlis' father Roy turns up with the woman pickpocket. He is wounded and Arlis grudgingly cleans him up. Roy and Ginnie, the young woman, drive off the next morning, and Ginnie recognises a house on their way as the one in a photograph of Kay's parents. She innocently tells Roy. Meanwhile, Arlis has also found Kay's photograph and realises that she was the baby that was left alive that night. He decides he must leave her.

By the afternoon, he is filled with remorse and phones her. But she has gone off with Ginnie to her family's house. He races after them, and finds Kay, Ginnie and Roy there. Roy explains to Arlis that he has brought Kay there to kill her and tie up "loose ends". Arlis is horrified and shoots his father dead. Ginnie steals Roy's watch and they all leave. Back at the motel, Kay asks Arlis for an explanation but he will not say anything. They say goodbye and he drives away, leaving her behind.

There is a certain hard-bitten touch of Jim Thompson in Steve



In a lonely place: Dennis Quaid, Meg Ryan

Kloves' second film. Its handful of characters are alienated and disconnected: in the effort to keep his past at bay, Arlis deals with vending machines and tic-tac-toe-playing chickens rather than human beings; the hard-smoking-and-drinking Kay has no family, and is running away from a loveless marriage; Roy's criminal activities have set him apart from the rest of the world and from his son; and Ginnie is a wandering thief with no roots.

Arlis and Ginnie prefer it that way, although the entertainingly disdainful Ginnie's two moments of near sentimentality are both centred round family matters – Kay's mother and the murder of Kay's family. But Kay and Roy believe, in their different ways, in the strength of human relationships: Kay, in her constant optimism in looking for the right man; Roy, in his endlessly stated conviction of the bond of flesh and bone. Both are proved wrong. Kay's desire for togetherness keeps leading her to the very men she should avoid – first Reese, then Arlis. And Roy is so convinced of the ties that bind that he taunts Arlis into killing him.

But Roy's relationship with his son is a very twisted kinship: when Arlis is a child, Roy uses it to inspire fear. Now, there seems to be a certain amount of mutual loathing. Once he has seen that Arlis and Kay are happy, Roy's suggestion that Arlis not only be present but even take part in Kay's murder seems sadistic in the extreme. Arlis, for his part, is torn between the kinship his father insists on and hatred of his father's way of life and what it has done for him.

Where does that lead the film but to the notion of transgression? How can Arlis ever make up for what he has done? However law-abiding and disconnected from other people he has become, every baby's cry makes it plain that he never ceases to be haunted by his past. So when his father makes it possible, Arlis pays for his past transgression through another murder, that of his father, and ends up losing not just Kay but Roy too. The Biblical tone here is echoed in Arlis' own words. Asked by Kay what happened at the farm, he replies, like the most macho of film heroes, "Some things are better left unsaid." His father's

blood, staining his shirt, he refers to as "just a little blood" – Arlis has made his sacrifice and the ties have finally been cut.

This could be pretty powerful stuff, yet the film remains surprisingly flat. Dennis Quaid, returning to a serious role after several years of fooling around, is convincingly clamped-jawed and diffident, but never much more. Although the film does not opt for crude psychology in explaining Arlis' past and present, neither does it offer any clues as to what happened to turn the mute, sullen, tattooed little devil child at the film's start into the man he has become. The ambivalence in his relationship with his father – growlingly played by James Caan as a charmer with a very nasty streak – is never expressed enough to make an impact. Only one moment, when Roy pulls him close to him on a motel bed and Arlis automatically jerks away, almost in pain, gives a sense of what goes on between them.

Meg Ryan's Kay is also part of the problem. Her variation on the ditsy, gutsy lady may please or turn stomachs, depending on your preference, but her place as the ever-hopeful innocent seems overly schematic. Despite her shows of independence, she keeps coming across as part of the plot mechanism rather than part of the film, and the result is not altogether engaging.

Flesh and Bone misses the lightness of touch of Kloves' first feature, *The Fabulous Baker Boys*, but it is not without its moments of humour, such as the spectacle of Arlis grimly blow-drying his brightly coloured hens in a motel room crammed with vending machine items; or Ginnie greasing her fingers with Vaseline from her lips in order to steal a corpse's ring more easily.

What is more, the film's sour pessimism is graced by the down-at-heel motels, bars and diners that, in turn, perfectly offset the ugly Texan landscape, which only becomes beautiful at the farmhouse, a place desecrated by Roy. And if *Flesh and Bone* never quite works as a mystery or as a psychological drama, it ends up strongest as an atmospheric, parodic, if overlong, depiction of lonely lives in a lonely place.

Amanda Lipman

Fresa y chocolate (Strawberry and Chocolate)

Cuba 1993

Dirs: Tomás Gutiérrez Alea/Juan Carlos Tabío

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

Metro Tartan

Production Company

Instituto Cubano

del Arte

Industria

Cinematográficos

In association with

Instituto Mexicano de

Cinematografía

Telemadrid

Sociedad General

de Autores de España

Co. Tabasco Films

Executive Producers

Camilo Vives

Frank Cabrera

Georgina Balzaretti

Associate Producers

Nacho Cobo

Juan Muñoz

Production Manager

Miguel Mendoza

Location Manager

Javier González

Assistant Directors

Mayra Segura

Roberto Viña

Andrés Ortega

Rafael Rosales

Screenplay

Senel Paz

Based on his story

'El Lobo, El Bosque y

el Hombre Nuevo'

Continuity

Ileana Pérez

Director of Photography

Mario García Joya

Camera Operators

Mario García Joya

Ernesto Granados

Editors

Rolando Martínez

Miriam Talavera

Oswaldo Donatien

Set Decorator

Orlando González

Costume Design

Miriam Dueñas

Wardrobe Supervisor

Violeta Cooper

Make-up

Maria Elena del Toro

Graciela Grossas

Hairstylist

Juan Carlos

Elio Durán

Music

José María Vitier

Songs/Music Extracts

"D'amor sull'ali rose"

from 'Il Trovatore'

by Giuseppe Verdi;

"Adios a Cuba" by

Ignacio Cervantes,

performed by Frank

Fernández; "Las

Ilusiones perdidas",

"Homenaje" by and

performed by Ignacio

Cervantes; "A La

Antigua", "Interrump-

ida" by Ernesto

Lecinoa, performed by

Frank Fernández; "Ya

Ves" by and performed

by Pablo Milanes; "Tu

me sabes comprender"

by Ricardo Pérez,

performed by Benny

More; "Fefita" by José

Urfé, performed by

The Alberto Corrales

Group; "A Bayamo en

Coche" by Adalberto

Alvarez, performed

by Son 14

Sound

Germinal Hernández

Sound Recordist

Silvia Rodríguez

Sound Re-Recordists

Ignacio René Cerón

Sound Effects

Benito Amaro

Cast

Jorge Perugorria

Diego

Vladimir Cruz

David

Mirta Ibarra

Nancy

Francisco Gattorno

Miguel

Joel Angelino

Germán

Marilyn Solaya

Vivian

Andrés Cortina

Santería Priest

Antonio Carmona

Boyfriend

Ricardo Avila

Taxi Driver

Maria Elena del Toro

Zolanda Ovia

Passengers

Diana Iris del Puerto

Neighbour

9,990 feet

111 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Subtitles

Discontented in her marriage, Vivian invites David to become her lover, but he refuses. Visiting Diego again, he is introduced to Cuban culture and Scotch whisky, and also meets his neighbour Nancy, the Neighbourhood Vigilance officer for Diego's apartment block. When she attempts suicide, David helps Diego get her to hospital and donates blood for her. Though still wary of Diego's homosexuality, David is increasingly drawn to his cultured lifestyle, and his own suppressed ambition to write is rekindled.

Germán's exhibition is banned; furious, he smashes his own work. Despite David's warnings, Diego sends a letter of protest to the Cuban authorities. Nancy, attracted to David and learning he is a virgin, resolves to initiate him. After lunch at the apartment, Diego leaves David and Nancy alone together and they make love. Miguel, believing David has been corrupted, visits Diego and attacks him, but David intervenes. Under pressure to leave Cuba, Diego decides to give in. After a return visit to the cafe where they met, Diego and David say farewell - and embrace for the first time.

Tomás Gutiérrez Alea has always presented the Cuban authorities with something of a problem. The country's most prominent film-maker and a committed supporter of Castro's revolution, he has nonetheless repeatedly used his films to show up the flaws and idiocies of the regime: pig-headed bureaucracy in the black comedy of *Death of a Bureaucrat*, macho sexism in *Up to a Point*. Equally worrying to officialdom is his sympathetic treatment of those who find themselves marginalised by Castroism, like the vacillating bourgeois hero of his *Memoires of Underdevelopment*.

Both these elements - the satire, and the sympathy for outsiders - come together in *Strawberry and Chocolate*, the first Cuban film to dare suggest it's OK, and maybe even more than OK, to be gay. Castro's regime has long been notorious for a rampant homophobia that has driven a lot of people into exile - not least Gutiérrez Alea's one-time colleague, the great cinematographer Nestor Almendros. This self-inflicted wound by a society that already has all the enemies it needs is what the film passionately deplores; as Diego asserts, "I'm a part of this country. And without me you'd be missing a part." Through Diego, David comes to discover a whole submerged heritage of Cuban culture, rejected by this regime or that - from the gay novelist José Lezama Lima, his books suppressed under Communism, to the composer Ignacio Cervantes, driven out by the Spanish. Cervantes' rueful "Farewell to Cuba" recurs through the film as a leitmotif; José María Vitier's score recalls it again as Diego himself prepares for exile.

In some quarters - and not only gay activist ones - *Strawberry and Chocolate* has apparently given offence. There are certainly more compelling reasons for deploring institutionalised homoph-



Favourite flavours: Perugorria, Cruz

bia than that it impoverishes cultural life, and the overall tenor of the film's argument - that just being gay doesn't mean you're not a nice person - may well appear culpably naive. Stereotypes aren't absent, either; our first view of Jorge Perugorria's Diego, primping and fluttering and striking queenly poses, arouses all the most dismal expectations. But Diego gains steadily in dignity as the film progresses, and in those early scenes we're after all seeing him through the eyes of David, a Party stalwart with all his prejudices bristlingly erect. (He had instantly figured Diego for a *maricón*, he tells Miguel, because he ordered strawberry ice cream when there was chocolate on offer.)

In any case, Gutiérrez Alea isn't concerned only with Cuban homophobia - an attitude openly sanctioned by Castro himself - but uses it to symbolise a geriatric revolution seizing up in every joint. In the entrance to Diego's apartment block, a crumbling baroque *palacio* from colonial days, a huge mural of Fidel is flaking off the wall - one disintegrating regime superimposed on another. At one point Diego plays David some Callas, commenting, "Why can't we produce voices like that? We can't always listen to María Remola." For Remola, a superannuated Cuban singer who refuses to retire, read Fidel, still heard blaring out daily on public loudspeakers. The revolution badly needs a new voice - and its condition at the grassroots is embodied in Diego's friend Nancy, the Neighbourhood Vigilance officer. Supposedly local guardian of revolutionary fervour, Nancy operates a thriving black market service for neighbours, prays to an image of St Barbara and repeatedly attempts suicide. It's a measure of the indoctrinaire warmth of Gutiérrez Alea's film that she also relieves David of his virginity, in a scene of genuine erotic tenderness.

About to depart, Diego takes David on a farewell tour of Havana, "one of the world's most beautiful cities. You just have time to see it before it collapses in shit." The scene gains added poignancy from Gutiérrez Alea's own condition: now seriously ill with cancer, he had to call in Juan Carlos Tabío to help him complete the film. Behind the film's wit and playfulness can be sensed a note of desperation, the urgency of a man who sees his native city and his native country collapsing in shit, and fears that their time, like his, is running short.

Philip Kemp

A Good Man in Africa

USA 1993

Director: Bruce Beresford

Certificate

15

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Polar Entertainment

In association with

Capitol Films

Southern Sun

Executive Producers

Joe Caracciolo Jr

Jane Barclay

Avi Lerner

Sharon Harel

Producers

John Fiedler

Mark Tarlov

Co-producers

William Boyd

Bruce Beresford

Production Co-ordinator

Sallie Beechiner

Production Manager

Genevieve Hofmeyr

Unit Production Manager

Len Naude

Location Manager

Alan Shearer

Post-production

Supervisor

Cordelia Hardy

Post-production

Co-ordinator

United Kingdom:

Rozanne Lipschitz

New York:

Tia Lemke

Assistant Directors

Mark Egerton

Cordelia Hardy

Gavin Joubert

Peter Thage

Di McCarthy

Casting

Billy Hopkins

Susie Figgis

Screenplay

William Boyd

Based on his novel

Script Supervisor

Maureen Conway

Director of Photography

Andrzej Bartkowiak

Camera Operator

Buster Reynolds

Editor

Jim Clark

Associate Editor

Jeremy Gibbs

Production Designer

Herbert Pinter

Art Director

Graeme Orwin

Set Decorator

Vic Botha

Special Effects Supervisor

Rick Cresswell

Costume Design

Rosemary Burrows

Wardrobe Supervisor

Jayne Forbes

Make-up

Tracy Crystal

Hairstylist

Lloyd Power

Titles/Opticals

Plume Partners/

Peerless Camera Co.

Music

John du Prez

Additional Music:

Mario Lavista

George Lee

Music Performed by

High Life Vocalists:

Mick Joe Lusala

Abu Sidique

Cleo Dorcas Goodwin

Music Producer

John du Prez

Music Consultant

Bones Howe

Songs/Music Extracts

"Matutu Mirika",

"Neo Abe Beto" by

and performed by
Eric Aggeman; "Come
Home", "A Good Man
in Africa", "I Love
Africa" by George Lee,
performed by The
George Lee Band;
"I Need You" by and
performed by Lionel
Cole; "My Foolish
Heart" by Ned
Washington, Victor
Young, performed
by Maucha Adnet
Supervising Sound Editor
Les Hodgson
Dialogue Editor
Peter Musgrave
 Foley Editor
Vernon Messenger
 Sound Recordist
Hank Garfield
 Re-recording Mixer
Robin O'Donoghue
Dominic Lester
 Stunt Co-ordinator
Roly Jansen

Cast

Colin Friels

Morgan Leafy

Sean Connery

Dr Murray

John Lithgow

Arthur Fanshawe

Diana Rigg

Chloe

Louis Gossett Jr

Sam Adekunle

Joanne Whalley-Kilmer

Celia

Sarah-Jane Fenton

Priscilla

Maynard Ezashi

Friday

Jeremy Crutchley

Dalmire

Jackie Mofokeng

Hazel

Daphne Greenwood

Duchess

Themba Ndaba

Kojo

David Phetoe

Isaiah

Dambuzza Mledle

Sonny

</

Morgan Leafy, a mid-ranking diplomat in the West African state of Kinjana, feels his career is stagnant and wants to move elsewhere. As Kinjana prepares for a presidential election, Leafy's superior, High Commissioner Arthur Fanshawe, sets him the task of charming the election's likely winner, Sam Adekunle. There are oil reserves off the Kinjanan coast, and Britain would like a stake in them. Leafy meets Adekunle's beautiful wife Celia, who promises to introduce him to her husband. Fanshawe has also asked Leafy to show his newly arrived daughter Priscilla around. Leafy attempts to seduce her but fails. In the morning, bent double with pain, Leafy visits the hospital, and gives a urine sample to Dr Alex Murray, known locally as the "good man". Meanwhile, Priscilla has thawed and asks Leafy to take her home. As they are leaving, Leafy runs into Murray, who tells him the tests show he might have a sexually transmitted disease, ruining his night with Priscilla.

Later Innocence, a member of Fanshawe's staff, is struck dead by lightning. Local custom insists she cannot be moved until a juju man performs a ceremony. Fanshawe is especially anxious that the body should be moved, since he is expecting a visit from a minor royal. Murray, sensitive to local custom, refuses to help. He tells Leafy, however, that the tests proved negative, allowing him to take advantage of Celia's sexual overtures. But, as Leafy leaves the Adekunle home after spending the night with Celia, Sam catches him. As punishment, he gives Leafy the job of bribing Murray, the only member of a local board blocking one of Adekunle's building projects.

Leafy and his employee Friday move Innocence's body in the night, but Fanshawe's staff refuse to work when they see the body gone. To add to Leafy's problems, Murray refuses his bribe. Adekunle wins the election, and comes to an understanding with the British over the oil. Kinjana's radicals are unhappy and gather menacingly outside a reception attended by Adekunle and the British. When they threaten to attack, Leafy offers to don Fanshawe's clothes and make a run for it in the official car, providing a diversion. Fanshawe's wife insists on going with him; they manage to escape from the rioting crowd. As they return to town, they discover that Murray has been seriously injured in a road accident. Before Murray dies, Leafy tells him that he too

will try to be a good man. Returning to the embassy, Leafy gives Innocence's family the money for the juju man.

Bruce Beresford gives the impression that he directs with his mind on other things. If there is any tempo to the writing – and there are plenty of scenes here which ought to be knockabout – he manages to lose it. Sometimes, it seems we are watching one of those guide-to-the-production packages, *The Making of 'A Good Man in Africa'* perhaps, the camera furtively picking up the action a beat behind.

William Boyd adapted the screenplay from his own novel of the same name. Its concerns are twofold – to satirise the political games played both by the British and the locals, and to trace how Leafy gains wisdom and a moral conscience. Central to both is Dr Murray, possibly, it's said, the last good man in Africa. The character so matches the way we assume Sean Connery to be – honourable, strong, no-nonsense – that he might almost be making an in-person appearance, striding boldly into the fiction. At one point, Murray/Connery tells Leafy that his ambition is to go somewhere warm and play golf. He's already made his judgement on the film, you think, and is itching to get back to his Marbella course.

In adapting, Boyd has stuck pretty closely to his novel, resulting in some sketchiness in the necessary compression. We only discover in the film's second half how sensitive Leafy is about his lowly roots, from a drunken speech he makes about his dear old dad. This sensitivity informs Boyd's novel from the start, contributing to a more complex character than the one we see on screen – one who attempts to quieten any moral qualms by reminding himself of the benefits of getting on. Despite an affably rumpled Colin Friels, the screen Leafy's changing of his ways comes as something of a surprise.

The sketchiness is heightened by Leafy's continually running about from sexual encounter to embassy mess. This perpetual motion ends up illustrating the adaptor's problems. How do you fit the whole novel into a 94-minute film? Apparently, by having the characters run at top speed from start to finish. With all this scurrying, and the line of women queuing up for Leafy (partly, it seems, because he has a large penis – a running joke), this could be a *Carry On* film.

Boyd was brought up in Ghana and Nigeria, and Beresford lived in Nigeria for two years. Even so, much of the picture of Africa, both in the novel and film, seems dated and stereotypical, and would surely have done so in 1981, when the novel was published. Speech from Friday – yes, *Friday* – is of the "Masta e never come home yet" sort. (As balance, there is the sharp Adekunle, who doesn't need Western lessons in scheming.) On the British side, Fanshawe is essence of upper middle-class diplomatic duffer. In this company, no wonder Connery seems like the real thing.

Robert Yates

I Love Trouble

USA 1994

Director: Charles Sheer

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Buena Vista

Production Company

Touchstone Pictures

In association with

Caravan Pictures

Producer

Nancy Meyers

Co-producer

Bruce A. Block

Associate Producers

John D. Schofield

Julie B. Crane

Production Co-ordinators

Rita Grant-Miller

Illinois/Wisconsin:

Lisbeth Wynn-Owen

Unit Production Manager

John D. Schofield

Location Managers

John Panzarella

Las Vegas:

Christine O'Rourke

Illinois/Wisconsin:

Don J. Hug

Post-production Co-ordinator

Tia Nolan

2nd Unit Directors

Bruce A. Block

Charles Picerni

Assistant Directors

K.C. Colwell

Bruce Carter

Gwyneth Horder

Payton

Casting

Bonnie Timmermann

Las Vegas:

Spectrum Casting

Voice:

Barbara Harris

Chicago:

Richard S. Kordos

Nan Charbonneau

Screenplay

Nancy Meyers

Charles Sheer

Script Supervisors

Adell Aldrich

Sioux Richards

Director of Photography

John Lindley

2nd Unit Directors of Photography

Tom Priestley

Illinois/Wisconsin:

Tom Houghton

Constantine Makris

Aerial Photography

Stan McClain

Camera Operators

Martin Schaefer

Lawrence C. Karman

Steadicam Operators

David Emmerichs

Larry McConkey

Visual Effects Editor

David Moritz

Rodents Scene

Visual Effects

VIFX

Digital Effects

Supervisor:

Brad Kuehn

Co-ordinator:

Michelle Valliolo

Compositing Artists:

Jerry Pooler

Tom Smith

Artist:

James Valentine

Matte Paintings

Matte Effects

Ken Marschall

Newspaper Graphic Design

Kim Wedlake

Editors

Paul Hirsch

Walter Murch

Adam Bernardi

Additional:

Richard Marks

Lynzee Klingman

Production Designer

Dean Tavoularis

Art Director

Alex Tavoularis

Set Design

Sean Haworth

James J. Murakami

Nick Navarro

William O'Brien

Nancy Tobias

Set Decorator

Gary Fettes

Set Dressers

Kurt Hulett

Eric Hulett

Edson C. Moreno

Jeffrey A. Kushon

Christopher Carlson

Special Effects Co-ordinators

Stan Parks

Paula Ciccone

Special Effects

Dan Sudick

Guy Faria

Gintar Repecka

Johnny Fontana

William E. Dawson Jnr

James E. Nagle

Costume Design

Susan Becker

Costume Supervisors

Lucinda C. Campbell

Elinor C. Bardach

Make-up

Richard Dean

Bradley Wilder

Hairstylists

Sally Herschberger

Lyndell Quiyou

K.G. Ramsey

Title Design

Pittman Hensley

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Music

David Newman

Orchestrations

Chris Boardman

William Kidd

Peter Tomashek

Steve Branson

Christopher Klatman

Don Davis

Joel Rosenbaum

Art Kempf

Mark McKensie

Brad Warner

Scott Smalley

John Neufeld

Song Supervisor

Marylata E. Jacob

Music Editors

Tom Kramer

George A. Martin

Tom Villano

Music Consultants

Daniel Allan Carlin

Score:

Sandy Janko

Krys Newman

Songs/Music Extracts

"Houseparty", "Piano

Cocktail", "Steakhouse

Piano" by Ken

Wannberg; "Good

Morning Chicago"

by Steve Tyrell, Bill

Reichenback; "Are

You Gonna Go My

Way" by Lenny Kravitz,

Craig Ross, performed

by Lenny Kravitz;

"Rainbow Town" by

and performed by

Michael Silversher,

Patty Silversher;

"Heartache Tonight"

by Don Henley, Glenn

Frey, Bob Seger, J.D.

Souther, performed

by David Palmer;

"You've Really Got

a Hold On Me" by

William "Smokey"

Robinson, performed

by Robby Kirmsse;

"NBC News Theme"

by John Williams;

"Outdoor Life No. 1"

by Tom Elliot; "Bridal

Chorus" (from

"Lohengrin") by Richard Wagner, performed by Robert Shaw Chorale, RCA Victor Orchestra; "Affettuoso" (from "Brandenburg Concerto No. 5") by Johann Sebastian Bach, performed by New Leipzig Bach Collegium Musicum

Choreography

Peggy Holmes

Sound Design

Soundelux

Supervising Sound Editors

Mark P. Stockinger

Larry Kemp

Dialogue Editors

Dan Rich

Richard Dwan Jnr

Sarah Rothenberg

Goldsmith

Mike Szakmeister

Mark Lapointe

Chris Welch

Vic Radulich

Supervising ADR Editors

Leslie Shatz

Jeff Watts

ADR Editors

Harriet Fildow

Bill Voigtlander

Sukei Fontelieu

Zack Davis

Foley Editor

Lou Kleinman

Sound Mixers

Richard Bryce

Goodman

Music:

Bruce Botnick

Robert Fernandez

ADR Mixers

Doc Kane

Weldon Brown

Gilles Missir

Foley Mixer

Marilyn Graf

Sound Effects Editors

Trevor Jolly

Dan Hegeman

Jeffrey Rosen

Chris Sheldon

Glenn T. Morgan

Christopher Assells

David Baldwin

Paul Timothy Carden

Frank Smathers

Clay Collins

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Robert J. Litt

Elliot Tyson

Greg P. Russell

Foley Artists

Kevin Bartnof

Ellen Heuer

Technical Adviser

Blaise Arena

Consultants

Deception:

Michael Weber

Ricky Jay

Chicago. Ace author, columnist and womaniser Peter Brackett reports to work at the *Chronicle*. His editor knows that Brackett's latest column is a rehash of something he wrote many years before. News of a fatal rail crash comes in and Brackett, who hasn't had to do leg-work in years, is the only available reporter. At the crash scene, Brackett waits to find out when the train was last serviced. He sees an attractive young cub reporter, Sabrina Peterson, from a rival paper, the *Globe*; she rebuffs his patronising attentions. Meanwhile a gang of youths steal some luggage from the crash, including a briefcase.

Next day, Peterson has scooped Brackett with a story about the suspension of an engineer with a drink problem. This begins a tit-for-tat war in which Brackett rediscovers his newsman's instincts. The two reporters vie for each new break, sending each other ironic gifts, and laying down false clues. The trail leads them both to the young gang leader's lair, where they find his body next to a scribbled note showing the letters: LD. Sabrina picks up a pen that was in the briefcase and absent-mindedly keeps it.

The pair are attacked by assassins; after escaping they agree to team up for research. Brackett discovers from a wedding group's video footage that the train was sabotaged. One of the victims is discovered to be the son of a recently deceased scientist who was working on a new hormone called LDF that increases the speed with which cows produce milk. Separate leads take Brackett and Peterson to a Wisconsin company that is developing the hormone. After looking around, the pair are kidnapped but Brackett manages to crash the car and disable the assassin. They get a lift to Las Vegas, where they are again the targets of an assassin. They evade him by entering a wedding parlour and have to go through the ceremony; later in a honeymoon hotel, they confess their attraction for each other.

Back in Chicago, Brackett finds out that Peterson has gone undercover as a tour guide at the LDF plant. Realising that she is in danger, he breaks in and finds her about to be executed by the company's chief hitman. Brackett saves her and microfilm is discovered, revealing that the hormone has disastrous side effects.

The writer-director/writer-producer team of Charles Shyer and Nancy Myers have devoted themselves to reviving the classic form of Hollywood romantic comedy in films such as *Irreconcilable Differences* and their remake of *Father of the Bride*. But their take on the genre represents something of an indulgence in false memory syndrome. While *Pretty Woman* and *Sleepless In Seattle* have shown that there are ways to effectively update the 'women's picture' of the 30s, 40s and 50s, *I Love Trouble* by-passes the updating process by referring not to romantic comedies as they actually were but to the way we nostalgically remember



Hack job: Nolte, Roberts

them to be. Apart from occasional bursts of high-tech thriller violence, the narrative offers an idealised, ungrounded form of romance that belies the sheen of world-weary sophistication initially presented in the character of Peter Brackett. Yet such a sophistication is at the core of the model that Shyer and Myers so fondly and regularly allude to.

Amoral news hacks desperate for a story have been a cinema staple since Hecht and MacArthur's play *The Front Page* was first adapted for the screen in 1931. With each new incarnation, however, the portrayal of professional duplicity and cynicism has been progressively less shocking. Figures from the news media are now so relentlessly demonised that any sign of decency is now likely to be thought unreasonable – a trope knowingly exploited in Ron Howard's recent newsroom hit *The Paper*. But Brackett and Peterson are too pleasant to be journalists from any era. Nolte oozes a knowingly hokey charm, while Roberts wears a nervous smile that insists that she's really a nice girl. Their romance is a cornball dance, one that Shyer and Myers' idols – Hawks, Cukor, Lubitsch – would surely have subverted.

The characterisations in *His Girl Friday* and *Trouble in Paradise* (the most obvious models here) are more hard-bitten than any recent romantic comedy. The idea that *I Love Trouble* is just too naive for today's more cynical era therefore doesn't hold up. Rather, the film fails either to tap into modern anxieties or to arouse our empathy. *Sleepless in Seattle* and *Pretty Woman* at least acknowledge issues such as single parenthood and social alienation. Without a recognisable hook into the present, *I Love Trouble* exists instead in a junkshop limbo of hybridisation, joining the Coen brothers' *The Hudsucker Proxy* in demonstrating that lovingly collected spare parts cannot keep a classic form on the road forever.

As for the machine-gun attacks and car chases that interrupt the reporter couple's banter, these are desultory motifs of a plot that lacks any hint of humanity. The film seems to be pieced together in such a way that rumours of on-set difficulties between the two stars would appear to be born out. Julia Roberts is so concerned to look vulnerably wholesome that her constant reciprocal pickpocketing of Nick Nolte looks more like kleptomania than ruthless one-upmanship. Still, it's a useful metaphor for the jackdaw mentality currently infesting Hollywood.

Nick James

It Could Happen To You

USA 1994

Director: Andrew Bergman

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Columbia TriStar

Production Company

Adelson/Baumgarten

Lobell/Bergman

Executive Producers

Gary Adelson

Craig Baumgarten

Joseph Hartwick

Producer

Mike Lobell

Production Co-ordinator

Alexis Alexanian

Unit Production Manager

Joseph Hartwick

Location Manager

Pamela Thur

Post-production Supervisor

Paul A. Levin

Assistant Directors

Henry Bronchtein

Michael DeCasper

Julie A. Bloom

Casting

John Lyons

Christine Sheaks

Screenplay

Jane Anderson

Script Supervisor

Robin Squibb

Director of Photography

Caleb Deschanel

Camera Operator

Henry Lynk

Steadicam Operator

Ted Churchill

Editor

Barry Malkin

Production Designer

Bill Groom

Art Director

Dennis Bradford

Set Decorator

George DeFitta Jr

Storyboard Artist

Donald Caruthers

Special Effects

Albert Griswold

William Traynor

Costume Design

Julie Weiss

Costume Supervisors

Kevin Faherty

Melissa Stanton

Make-up

Lizbeth Williamson

Hairstylist

Alan d'Angerio

Title Design

Nina Saxon Film Design

Titles/Opticals

Janos O. Pilenyi

Music

Carter Burwell

Composer

Joe Mulherin

Orchestrations

Sonny Kompanek

Music Supervisor

Peter Afterman

Music Editors

Todd Kasow

Thomas Drescher

Music Consultant

Jeffrey Pollack

Songs/Music Extracts

"I Feel Lucky" by Mary Chapin Carpenter,

Don Schlitz, performed by Mary Chapin Carpenter; "Round of Blues" by Shawn Colvin, Larry Klein,

performed by Shawn Colvin; "Pony Time" by Don Covay, John Berry, performed by Barrence Whitfield; "New York, New York" by John Kander, Fred Ebb; "You Must Believe

Me" by Curtis Mayfield,

performed by The Impressions; "Come See About Me" by Brian Holland, Edward Holland, Lamont Dozier, performed by The Supremes; "Swingdown, Swingtown" by and performed by Wynton Marsalis; "Holiday For Strings" by David Rose, performed by David Rose String Orchestra; "She's No Lady" by and performed by Lyle Lovett; "They Can't Take That Away From Me" by George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin, performed by Billie Holiday; "Now It Can Be Told"; "Always" by Irving Berlin, performed by Tony Bennett; "You Lied To Me" by Cathy Dennis, Shep Pettibone, Tony Shimkin, Joseph DeSimone, John Marmora, performed by Cathy Dennis; "We're in the Money" by Al Dubin, Harry Warren; "Young at Heart" by Johnny Richards, Carolyn Leigh, performed by Frank Sinatra; "Young at Heart" by Johnny Richards, Carolyn Leigh, performed by Tony Bennett, Shawn Colvin

Choreography John Carrafa

Supervising Sound Editor Michael Kirchberger

Sound Editor Paul P. Soucek

Dialogue Editors Laura Civiello Bitty O'Sullivan-Smith Dan Korintus

ADR Editors Jane McCully Tony Martinez

Foley Supervisor Bruce Pross

Foley Editors Frank Kern Eliza Paley

Sound Recordist Mike Schmidt

Sound Mixer Gary Alper

Sound Re-recordist Mixer Lee Dichter

Sound Effects Recordist Andy Aaron

Foley Artist Marko Costanzo

Stunt Co-ordinator Jeff Habberstad

Cast

Nicolas Cage

Charlie Lang

Bridget Fonda

Yvonne Bindi

Rosie Perez

Muriel Lang

Wendell Pierce

Bo Williams

Isaac Hayes

Angel

Victor Rojas

Jesu

Seymour Cassel

Jack Gross

Stanley Tucci

Eddie Biasi

J.E. Freeman

Sal Bontempo

Red Buttons

Walter Zakuto

Richard Jenkins

C. Vernon Hale

Robert Dorfman

Walter

Charles Busch

Timothy

Beatrice Winde

Judge

Ginny Yang

Mrs Sun

Rene Rivera

Julio

Angel David

Esteban

Anna Lobell

Korean Deli Customer

Claudia Shear

Muriel's Customer

Jimmy Sabater

Fry Cook

Merwin Goldsmith

Bankruptcy Judge

Vincent Pastore

Barry Squitieri

Phil Stein

Jerome Turner

Bowling Team

George J. Manos

Lotto Official

Edward Goldstein

Candy Store Owner

Emily Deschanel

Paint-Throwing

Fur-Activist

Willie Colon

Mayor

Ranjit Chowdhry

Mr Patel

Rev Pedro Pietri

Homeless Man in

Coffee Shop

Charles B. Lowlicht

Jed Krasella

Passersby at Subway

Station

Bob Sheppard

Yankee Stadium

Announcer

Frank Pellegrino

Water's Edge Maitre d'

Kathleen McNenny

Plaza Desk Clerk

John Louis Fischer

Kaipo Schwab

Plaza Bellhops

Candace V. Tarpley

Bo's Wife

Elena C. Santiago

Bo's Daughter

Angelo Pietropinto

Jury Foreperson

Mina Bern

Muriel's Neighbour

Feiga Martinez

Jesu's Mom

John Norman Thomas

Mr Muktananda

John R. Russell

Blind Beggar

Ann Dowd

Carol

Kay Tong Lim

Sun

Jack Cafferty

Budd Mishkin

Carl White

Cheryl Washington

Peter Jacobson

Douglas Bernstein

Phil Parolisi

Amy Atkins

Alan Muraoka

Laury Marker

Felipe Luciano

Brenda Pressley

Ellen Lancaster

Television Reporters

9,123 feet

101 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Charlie Lang is a lowly cop, living in Queens, New York City. His beautiful wife Muriel is discontented with life in the suburbs, and not at all pleased with Charlie's insistence on staying honest. Meanwhile Yvonne Biasi, a waitress, is declared bankrupt after her unpleasant husband runs up thousands of dollars on her credit card and refuses to pay.

Charlie and his partner have a coffee at the cafe where Yvonne works. Unable to afford a tip, Charlie offers her half of whatever he wins that day on his (and Muriel's) lottery ticket. The number comes up, and the Langs win four million dollars. To Muriel's disgust, Charlie offers Yvonne her share. The three become instant celebrities, but their emotional paths begin to diverge. Muriel goes on a shopping spree, Charlie gives money to beggars, Yvonne buys the cafe where she works, establishing a table where tramps (like the narrator Angel) can eat for free. Then her rat-fink husband turns up.

Charlie interrupts a hold-up at his local grocers. He is then feted even more and earns a decoration. Charlie and Yvonne see little of each other, until, as lottery winners, they are invited to a party on a boat. The increasingly avaricious Muriel is besotted by smooth-sounding financial advisor Jack Gross; Charlie gets stranded on shore just as Yvonne arrives and the boat departs. While they eat together, the first sneaking romantic feelings arise; they agree to see more of each other when they realise the unpleasantness of their respective spouses. Yvonne's husband materialises again

and she leaves her flat to get away. Meanwhile, Charlie and Muriel decide to split up, and by chance Yvonne and Charlie spend the night at the same hotel, where their romance is consummated.

Muriel fights a nasty divorce, taking all the money (including Yvonne's share). Despite the public mud-slinging, Charlie and Yvonne remain in love, winning public acclaim (and a few thousand dollars) when Angel turns out to be an undercover newspaper photographer and publicises their picture.

● This latest from the Hollywood school of contemporary chaste romance focuses with great tenacity on the twin archetypes of the American Dream and the Ordinary Guy. In fact, one of the Guys is a Gal, and in tandem Charlie Lang and Yvonne Biasi prove durable symbols of US white blue-collarism. The film's original title *Cop Gives Waitress \$2m Dollar Tip* spells out the iconography and the milieu. That phrase pops up in the movie as one of a series of *New York Post* headlines which chronicle the plot moves in an appropriately downmarket manner. The movie has a cute but superficial point to make about the public consumption of such stories and the press's intervention to make them come true: in this case the phrase is a response to the final loving scene, after the central couple's ultraniche reputation has been blackened in court.

Bland good-guy characterisation causes what few problems there are in the script. Most of the time, however, director Andrew Bergman gets the tone of fresh-faced romance right. Cage and, in particular, Fonda are on good form and produce characters that are ingenious without the generic self-consciousness that might have unravelled the whole. They're aided by a screenplay that draws a simple universe of harmless, stickball-playing kids, unsmelly tramps and swindlers you can spot a mile away.

Compared to *Forrest Gump*, which also buys into the Capra-esque innocent's state of mind currently inspiring Hollywood, *It Could Happen To You* is utterly unapologetic about its fairy-tale aspirations: it's less of a parable than a cosy fireside tale. (Incidentally, both films refer to AIDS with a curious reticence, as if they are anxious to acquire its weight as a modern moral symbol, but are worried about accusations of tub-thumping).

For all that, the film's strength is in its portrayal of the love intrigue. Suspense derives not from whether it will happen but when. The romance barnstorms its way through uncertain portrayals of ethnicity, and easy sentiment. There are some moral surprises, no doubt intended to shore up the idea that this is a totally modern love match – like the fact that both lovers are technically adulterers – but as the court scene is designed to demonstrate, in the end, love is all you need.

Andrew Pulver

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

USA 1994

Director: Kenneth Branagh

Certificate
15

Distributor
Columbia TriStar
Production Company
American Zoetrope
TriStar Pictures
In association with
Japan Satellite
Broadcasting, Inc.
The IndieProd
Company

Executive Producer
Fred Fuchs
Producers
Francis Ford Coppola
James V. Hart
John Veitch
Co-producers
Kenneth Branagh
David Parfitt

Associate Producers
Robert De Niro
Jeff Kleeman
David Barron

Production Co-ordinator
Iona Price
Alpine Unit:
Hanka Weiszflog
Alpine Unit Production Manager
Leonhard Gmur

Unit Production Manager
David Barron
Unit Location Manager
Paul Shersby

Alpine Unit:
Stefan Zurcher
2nd Unit Director
Andrew Marcus
Action Unit Director
Simon Crane

Assistant Directors
Chris Newman
Simon Moseley
Bernard Bellew
Ben Howarth
Sallie-Anne Hard

Screenplay
Steph Lady
Frank Darabont
Based on the novel
by Mary Shelley

Script Supervisor
Annie Wotton
2nd Unit:
Anna Worley
Director of Photography
Roger Pratt

2nd Unit Director of Photography
Roger Lanser
Alpine Unit Aerial Photography
Matthew Allwork
Ian Speed

Camera Operator
Trevor Coop
2nd Unit:
Gordon Hayman
John Palmer

Steadicam Operators
Kate Robinson
Peter Robertson
Video Co-ordinator
Chris Warren

Editor
Andrew Marcus
Associate Editor
Kerry Kohler

Production Designer
Tim Harvey
Supervising Art Director
Martin Childs

Art Directors
John Fenner
Desmond Crowe
Dressing Co-ordinator
Jim O'Hare

Scenic Artists
Brian Bishop
Doug Bishop

Storyboard Artist

Jane Clark

Sculptures

Allan Moss

Fred Evans

Model Design

Terry Bridle

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Lulu Morgan

Special Effects Editor

Neil Farrell

Alpine Unit:

Peter Lange

Special Effects

Camera Operator

Dennis Lowe

Visual Effects Supervisor

Richard Conway

Visual Effects Floor

Supervisor

Stephen Hamilton

Snow Effects

David Crownshaw

Digital Effects Designers

Val Wardlow

Mark Nelmes

Paddy Eason

Chris Pantton

Dominic Parker

Costume Design

James Acheson

Costume Supervisor

Richard Pointing

Costumes

Pat Williamson

Make-up

Key:

Paul Engelen

Deborah Lanser

Christine Allsopp

Iiona Herman

Alpine Unit:

Linda Armstrong

Melissa Lackenstein

Special Make-up Effects

Creature Make-up and

Effects Design:

Daniel Parker

Prosthetics Make-up:

David White

Mark Coulter

Special Effects

Make-up Unit

Head Sculptor:

Pauline Fowler

Sculptors:

Mark Coulter

Julian Murray

Designer:

David White

Animatronics

Designer:

Nik Williams

Chief Mould Maker:

Barry Fowler

Chief Foamer:

Riad Karim

Chief Painter:

Marion Appleton

Paint and Finish:

Jane Headford

Hair Supervisor:

Janice Barnes

Fire Masks:

Michele Jones

Department

Co-ordinator:

Jaki Sale

Hair Design

Carol Hemming

Hair Stylists

Key:

Paolo Mantini

Betty Glasow

Hair Consultant

Iiona Herman

Title Design

Barbara Flinder

Opticals

Peerless Camera

Company

Music

Patrick Doyle

Music Conductor

David Snell

Orchestrations

Larry Ashmore

Music Supervisor

Maggie Rodford

Music Editors

Roy Prendergast

Gerard McCann

Choreography

Stuart Hopps

Supervising Sound Editor

Campbell Askew

Dialogue Editors

Robert Gavin

Bill Trent

Foley Editor

Graham Sutton

Sound Mixer

Ivan Sharrock

Alpine Unit:

Chris Munro

Foley Mixer

John Bateman

Re-recording Mixers

Robin O'Donoghue

Dominic Lester

Sound Effects Editor

Colin Miller

Digital Sound Effects

Dave Lawson

Foley Artists

Pauline Griffith

Jenny Lee-Wright

Performance Consultant

Hugh Cruttwell

Historical Consultant

Leonard Wolf

Stunt Co-ordinator

Simon Crane

Armourer

Richard Hooper

Alpine Unit:

Walter Aeberli

Animal Trainer

Kay Cutts

Cast

Robert De Niro

Creature/Sharp

Featured Man

Kenneth Branagh

Victor Frankenstein

Tom Hulce

Henry Clerval

Helena Bonham Carter

Elizabeth

Aidan Quinn

Walton

Ian Holm

Victor's Father

Richard Briers

Grandfather

John Cleese

Professor Waldman

Robert Hardy

Professor Krempe

Cherie Lunghi

Victor's Mother

Celia Imrie

Mrs Moritz

Trevyn McDowell

Justine

Gerard Horan

Claude

Mark Hadfield

Felix

Joanna Roth

Marie

Sasha Hanau

Maggie

Joseph England

Thomas

Alfred Bell

Landlord

Richard Clifford

Minister

George Asprey

Policeman

Richard Bonneville

Schiller

Ryan Smith

William

Charles Wyn-Davies

Young William

Rory Jennings

Young Victor

Christina Cuttall

Young Justine

Hannah Taylor-Gordon

Young Elizabeth

Susan Field

Frau Brach

Jimmy Yuill

Grigori

Chris Barnes

Shaun Prendergast

Tommy Wright

David Kennedy

Paul Gregory

Chris Hollis

Robin Lloyd

Alex Lowe

Graham Loughridge

Simon Cox

Robert Hines

Ship's Crew

Lonnie James

Rough Woman

Jenny Galloway

Vendor's Wife

Peter Jonfield

Rough Man

Edward Jewesbury

City Official

Slobhan Redmond

Midwife

Francine Morgan

Assistant Midwife

Sue Long

Woman in Labour

Angus Wright

Guard

Michael Gould

Stablehand

Max Gold

Servant

Abigail Reynolds

Theresa Fresson

Mark Inman

Dudi Appleton

Meriel Schofield

Mansion Staff

11,071 feet

123 minutes

Dolby stereo

Sony Dynamic

Digital Sound

In colour

Prints by

Technicolor

◀ sports this attire again on his wedding night. This quasi-sexual male labour is an alarming contrast to the film's images of women actually giving birth – both bloody, screaming, grim affairs. These could be a nod to feminist readings of the novel, which point to Mary Shelley's own gruesome experience (her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, died of septicaemia after giving birth to her, and Shelley herself had had a miscarriage just before she wrote *Frankenstein*).

Certainly, the film is full of body horror, the preserve of many contemporary horror movies: not only does this include the monster itself but corpse dissection, body parts being cleaved off and sewn together, two hangings, and the cholera epidemic that leaves dead bodies strewn everywhere. Elizabeth's murder is a nasty piece of Hannibal Lecter-style heart-ripping. And

the whole movie is drenched in blood.

Helena Bonham-Carter's Elizabeth echoes Victor's ever-dancing mother in character. Even though neither Elizabeth nor Justine gives birth, both meet a nasty end as a result of Victor's (literal) labour. The dancing of the past is also echoed, to great effect, when Victor waltzes pathetically with his second monstrous creation: the lolling rag doll made from Justine and Elizabeth. These women are born (and reborn) to suffer, and that makes the image of the burning female monster rampaging through the house particularly potent, expressing just as much of the pain of the new-born as the rages of De Niro's male creature.

De Niro is in good form, loping and howling at the horror of his dilemma. His nameless monster, bearing little relation to Boris Karloff, turns from a grunting animal into a pained, articu-

late psychopath who wants to be "normal" but cannot help his nature. He ends up a strangely modern creation, understanding psychological conflict where others, including Victor, can only show it. This combination of old and modern permeates the film. The language is colloquially contemporary; the mechanics of the re-animation are fleshed out with intricate-sounding discussions about acupuncture and electricity; and much is made of the scientific nature of Victor's lightning-conducting experiments to convince a knowing latter-day audience who will not be content simply with flashing buttons, sparks and bubbling potions.

The film also seems at pains to get to the heart of the nurture-vs-nature argument. Its conclusion rests on the fact that the monster has been made out of criminals, and must therefore be inherently evil. But the film never

asks why Victor, a happy little boy from a happy family, turns out as he does. If his obsession was brought about by losing his mother so gruesomely, then surely there is more to be said about the nature of evil, or of messing with the "natural state of things".

Between the crashing opening and closing as the sea ices up then melts again, every episode is a drama in some genre. The only unsatisfactory character is Aidan Quinn's Walton, more of a book-end than the glory-seeking explorer he is meant to be. The film is simply not large enough to have more than two big boys in it. Even so, after years of somewhat mistaken identity, it does the job of restoring Mary Shelley's book to its real place in the literary archive, while adding a touch of modernity that embraces its true horror and its sense of the bizarre.

Amanda Lipman



Morbid anatomy: Robert De Niro

The Punk and the Princess

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Mike Sarne

Certificate
18

Distributor
Feature Film Company

Production Company
Videodrome presents
A M2 production

Producers
Mike Sarne
Robin Mahoney

Associate Producers
David Goldstein
William Sarne

Production Manager
Lisa Lake

Location Manager
William Beaton

Post-production Supervisor
Matthew Salkeld

Assistant Directors
William Beaton
Glenna Forster-Jones

Screenplay
Mike Sarne
Based on the book *The Punk* by Gideon Sams

Additional Dialogue
William Sarne

Director of Photography
Alan M. Trow

Camera Operator
Sacha Austin

Opticals
Capital FX

Editors
Gwyn Jones
Matthew Salkeld

Art Director
Eleanor Baker

Wardrobe Supervisor
Ann Hardiman

Make-up
Penny Delamar

Title Design
Beaton

Music
Claudia Sarne
Charlie Creed-Miles
Nigel Powell

Music Director
Claudia Sarne

Music Editors
Robin Mahoney
Matthew Salkeld

Songs
"Trying To Get To You"
by Nigel Powell, Robin Mahoney, Claudia Sarne, "Sweet Mystery", "Go to Life" by Claudia Sarne, performed by Claudia Sarne; "You Don't Need Money" by Charlie Creed-Miles, Martin Harvey, performed by Martin Harvey; "Push the Clouds Away" by Charlie Creed-Miles, Dee Major, performed by Dee Major, Charlie Creed-Miles, Charlie Holmes; "Milton's Sex Rap" by and performed by Charlie Creed-Miles, Dee Major; "Just As Fat" by Charlie Creed-Miles, Charlie Holmes, performed by Charlie Creed-Miles, Charlie Holmes, Martin Harvey; "Come Outside" by Charles Blackwell; "Eddie the Eagle" by The Keatings, performed by Mike Sarne; "Eh Deh Deh-oh" by Charlie Creed-Miles, Glenna Forster-Jones, performed by Charlie Creed-Miles, Mike Sarne, Glenna Forster-Jones; "She's Alright" by and

performed by Prima Shock; "Looki, Looki" by Mike Sarne, Robin Mahoney, performed by Videodrome

Sound Editors
Robin Mahoney
Matthew Salkeld

Sound Recordists
Richard King
Hugh Graham

Stunt Co-ordinator
Gerry Crampton

Cast
Charlie Creed-Miles
David
Vanessa Hadaway
Rachel
David Shawyer
David's Father
Jess Conrad
Rachel's Father
Jacqueline Skarvellis
David's Mother
Yolanda Mason
Rachel's Stepmother
Alex Mollo
Stray Cat
Peter Miles
Shakespeare
R.J. Bell
R.J.
Martin Harvey
Lefty
Julian Wooley
Monk
David Doyle
Roger Rabbit
Daniel Hsley
Weedy
Louie Simpson
Anthony Okunbowa
Sam Adams
Punk Friends
Brian Miller
Fishmonger
Glenna Forster-Jones
Rosemary Smith
Actresses
Matthew Salkeld
William Sarne
Pool Players
Fiona Denison
Girl in Squat
Andrew Gordon
Anthony Gammon
Stray Cat's Mates
Zach Vanderfelt
Nurse
Sam Cox
Laura Cox
Psychiatric Patients
Cleio Sylvestre
Woman in Fish Shop
Catherine Reid
Small Girl in Fish Shop
George Ellis-Jones
Paul Tate
Colin Thompson
Rupert Sharp
Policemen
Jeffrey Harris
Psychiatric Doctor
Helen Gill
Doctor
Robert Heath
Juvenile Lead
Fernando Sison
Filipino Butler
Carmen Kalaw
Filipino Maid

8,676 feet
96 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor
Anamorphic
Original Title:
The Punk

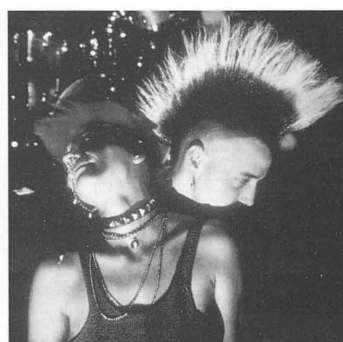
In a Notting Hill pub, David, a young punk, beats vicious rocker Stray Cat in a game of pool; Stray Cat chases him out into the street. Next door, David notices a small theatre, where he falls for a young American woman, Rachel, who is playing the female lead in a production of *Romeo and Juliet* bankrolled by her rich father. At home, David argues with his policeman father and, to his mother's horror, leaves for good. He sets up house for himself in a large, deserted squat and gets a job at a fishmonger's, taking money in advance to buy a ticket for the play. But the production has come to a premature end, and the company manager refuses to give him Rachel's phone number. He later sees her in a pub, but she appears to be going out with Stray Cat, who makes as if to attack him again.

A drug dealer known as The Monk tries to persuade David to sample some of his produce, but he refuses. A less sensible friend overdoses and dies. At a party, David meets Rachel, who is no longer with Stray Cat. They talk, and leave together. Stray Cat comes to the party and hospitalises one of David's friends with his Stanley knife. The next day, David's dad comes to the fish shop to tell him his mum is in hospital. He goes to see her and finds that she has gone mad.

David and Rachel make love at his squat. After he drops her off at her house in the morning, Stray Cat is waiting for him. David knocks him off his motorbike and gives an impressive demonstration of martial arts skills, but Stray Cat still comes after him with his Stanley knife, and David kills him in self-defence. On the run now, he tries to phone Rachel for help, but her father won't let him speak to her. David is picked up by The Monk, who takes him to hide in a cemetery and gives him heroin. By appearing to play along with her father, Rachel manages to escape, and goes to the squat, where she reads David's diary, in which he confesses his love for her. His father, who has picked up The Monk, and found out where David is hiding, takes her there. She finds him cold and apparently dead, having taken the heroin, but miraculously he survives and, eventually, they are married.

The name of *The Punk and the Princess* writer/producer/director, Mike Sarne (the man responsible for 1961's rarely-remembered Number One hit "Come Outside", and who was later dubbed "the best director I ever had" by no less than Raquel Welch) still strikes fear into some very stout hearts. On the evidence of this enjoyable and strangely affecting oddity, some kind of reassessment may well be in order. And "From the man who brought you... *Myra Breckinridge*" certainly has a bit of a ring to it.

Reviewed, as *The Punk*, in S&S Oct 93, Sarne's film - now released in a different cut - has lost nothing in contemporary relevance in the course of the delay; you can't lose what you never had. Trained, somewhat outrageously,



'The Punk and the Princess'

as "an accurate portrait of the present generation", *The Punk and the Princess* actually takes place in a bizarre time-warped far beyond the call of mere budgetary restraint. The action is set neither in the past nor the present. Salt 'n' Pepa play on the pub jukebox and Ecstasy is freely available; and yet the punks are cheeky young pups, not the Strongbow-addled losers they would be today, and the bands they listen to play strange late-60s pop.

The film's new title, with its strong hint of fairy tale, is a far better reflection of what to expect from it than the original one. No-one should go to see *The Punk and the Princess* expecting a gritty tale of existential alienation (this film makes Hanif Kureishi's *London Kills Me* look like a work of hard-bitten documentary realism) and that, given that the original story was written in the late 70s by 14-year-old schoolboy Gideon Sams, is exactly how it should be. Other seeming incongruities also turn out to be strangely appropriate. The well-bred voices of posh young actors struggling to sound urban are not so much a travesty of punk authenticity, more a pretty accurate reflection - as anyone who has ever been to Notting Hill knows - of how things are there.

Charlie Creed-Mills, who also wrote and performs the theme song, ought to be a pain as The Punk, but is actually quite engaging; his downbeat jauntiness echoes that of the 60s boy chancers of *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush* and its ilk, and intensifies the amusing time-slip vibration. Among the supporting cast, Sarne's pop star contemporary Jess Conrad adds a new twist to the narcissistic poltroon role he might be thought to have perfected (if not in *The Great Rock 'N' Roll Swindle*, then certainly in Jim Davidson's stage show *Sinderella*) by doing it with a pony tail and an American accent. "We had something to fight for then," he proclaims of the 60s, "racism, Vietnam." (Some mistake here, surely.)

This is not the film's only moment of true insanity. Some of the jump cuts are beguilingly weird, and the pool cue ruckus which turns into a sword fight, complete with cutlass on the soundtrack, is a masterstroke. "Haven't you heard of Shakespeare?" our cheeky young hero is asked in another key exchange. "Doesn't he play football for Chelsea?" David ripostes. Not just "play", but actually "play football."

Ben Thompson

Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas

USA 1993

Director: Henry Selick

Certificate
PG

Distributor
Buena Vista

Production Company
Touchstone Pictures presents
A Burton/
Di Novi production

Producers
Tim Burton
Denise Di Novi

Co-producer
Kathleen Gavin

Associate Producers
Danny Elfman
Philip Lofaro
Jill Jacobs
Diane Minter

Production Co-ordinator
George Young

Production Manager
Philip Lofaro

Post-production Supervisor
Sara Duran

Casting
Mary Gail Artz
Barbara Cohen
San Francisco:
Hayes and Van Horn
Casting
Davia Nelson
ADR Voice:
Barbara Harris

Screenplay
Caroline Thompson
Based on a story and characters created by Tim Burton

Adaptation
Michael McDowell

Director of Photography
Pete Kozachik

Camera Operators
Jo Carson
Jim Aupperle
Richard E. Lehmann
Dave Hanks
Pat Sweeney
Ray Gilberti
Eric Swenson
Selwyn Eddy III

Additional Optical Effects
Image FX:
Harry Walton
Interformat:
Michael Hinton

Visual Effects Supervisor
Pete Kozachik

Digital Effects
Walt Disney Feature Animation
Supervisor:
Ariel Velasco Shaw
Ink & Paint Manager:
Gretchen Albrecht
Ink & Paint Final Check Supervisor:
Hortensia Casagran
Color Timing/Paint:
Thomas Cardone
Scene Planning Supervisor:
Ann Tucker

Animation Supervisor
Eric Leighton

Animators
Trey Thomas
Timothy Hittle
Michael Belzer
Anthony Scott
Owen Klatt
Angie Glocks
Justin Kohn
Eric Leighton
Paul Berry
Joel Fletcher
Kim Blanchette
Loyd Price
Richard C. Zimmerman
Stephen A. Buckley

Special Effects:
Gordon Baker
Miguel Domingo
Cachuela
Chris Green
Snow:
Dave Bossert

Armature Supervisor
Tom St. Amand

Mold Maker Supervisor
John A. Reed III

Character Fabricator Supervisor
Bonita De Carlo

Character Fabricators
Lauren Vogt
Timothy Reid Norton
Facundo Rabaudi
Sandy Clifford
Barbara Kossy
Elise Robertson
Valerie Sofranko-Banks
Michael Wick
Jeff Brewer
Elizabeth Jennings
Grace Murphy
Chrystene E. Ellis
Margot Hale
David Chong

Model Shop Supervisor
Mitch Romanowski

Model Makers
Paula Lucchesi
Joel Friesch
Jeff Brewer
Marc Ribaud
Bill Boes
Nick Bogle

Additional Character Design
David Cutler
Barry Jackson
Jorgen Klubein

Editor
Stan Webb

Associate Editor
Edie Ichioka

Consulting Editor
Chris Lebonzon

Visual Consultant
Rick Heinrichs

Art Director
Deane Taylor

Artistic Co-ordinator
Allison Abbate

Set Design/Dressing Supervisor
Gregg Olsson

Background Design
B.J. Fredrickson

Set Dressers
Gretchen Scharfenberg
Joel Friesch

Lead Scenic Artist
B.J. Fredrickson

Scenic Artists
Linda Overbey
Peggy Hrastar
Jennifer Clinard
Loren Hillman

Storyboard Supervisor
Joe Ranft

Storyboard Artists
Miguel Domingo
Cachuela
Bob Pauley
Jorgen Klubein
Steve Moore

Sculptures
Norm DeCarlo
Greg Dykstra
Shelley Daniels
Randal M. Dutra

Titles
Buena Vista Optical

Music/Lyrics/Score
Danny Elfman

Music Conductors
Songs:
Chris Boorman
Score:
J.A.C. Redford

Music Arrangements

Steve Bartek
Orchestrations
 Songs:
 Steve Bartek
 Score:
 Mark McKenzie
Music Editor
 Bob Badami

Songs

"Here Comes Santa Claus" by Gene Autry, Oakley Haldeman; "Deck the Halls" performed by Mantovani Orchestra and Chorus
Supervising Sound Editor
 Richard L. Anderson
Dialogue Editors
 Mary Andrews
 Joe Dorn
ADR Mixer
 Thomas J. O'Connell
ADR Recordist
 Rick Canelli
Foley Mixer
 Ezra Dweck
Sound Recordists
 Samuel Lehmer
 Dubbing:
 Tim Webb
 Tony Araki
 Music:
 Shawn Murphy
 Bobby Fernandez
 Bill Jackson
Music Mixer
 Shawn Murphy
Sound Re-recording Mixers
 Terry Porter
 Shawn Murphy
 Greg P. Russell
Sound Effects Editors
 Michael Chock
 James Christopher
Special Sound Effects
 John Pospisil
Foley
 Joan Rowe
 Hilda Hodges

Character Voices

Danny Elfman
 Jack Skellington (Singing)/Barrel/Clown with the Tear Away Face
 Chris Sarandon
 Jack Skellington (Speaking)

Catherine O'Hara

Sally/Shock
 William Hickey
 Evil Scientist
 Glenn Shadix
 Mayor
 Paul Reubens
 Lock
 Ken Page
 Oogie Boogie
 Ed Ivory
 Santa
 Susan McBride
 Big Witch/W.W.D.
 Debi Durst
 Corpse Kid/Corpse Mom/Small Witch
 Gregory Proops
 Harlequin
 Demon/Devil/
 Sax Player
 Kerry Katz
 Man Under
 Stairs/Vampire/
 Corpse Dad
 Randy Crenshaw
 Mr Hyde/
 Behemoth/Vampire
 Sherwood Ball
 Mummy/Vampire
 Carmen Twillie
 Undersea Gal/Man
 Under the Stairs
 Glenn Walters
 Wolfman
 Mia Brown
 Ann Fraser
 Jesse McClurg
 Robert Olague
 Elena Praskin
 Judy Durand
 Daamen Krall
 David McCharen
 David Randolph
 L. Peter Callender
 Jennifer Levey
 John Morris
 Bobbi Page
 Trampas Warman
 Doris Hess
 Christina MacGregor
 Gary Raff
 Gary Schwartz
 Additional Voices

6,848 feet

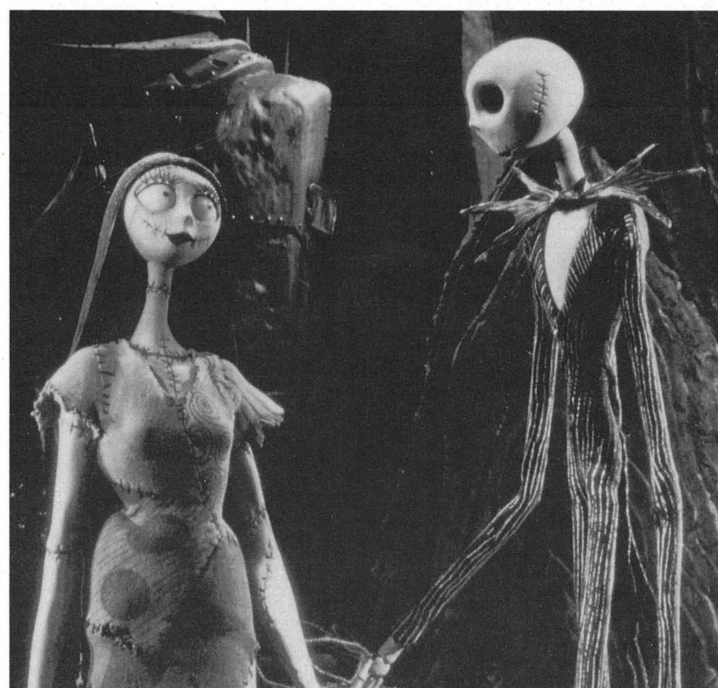
76 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Prints by

Technicolor



Romancing the bones: 'Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas'

tributes presents to children, who are terrified by various unleashed creatures, prompting the army to try to blast the Santa impersonator out of the sky. Realising his error, Jack returns to Halloweentown, defeats Oogie Boogie and releases Santa, who sets things right on Earth. Jack, having learned his lesson, admits that he reciprocates Sally's love.

This animated feature is billed as *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas*, although co-producer Burton neither directed nor wrote it. He did, however, originate the characters and story, which date back to the period when he was an animator in the Disney alleys, toiling on *The Fox and the Hound* and discomforting the management with the shorts *Vincent* and *Frankenweenie*. It is to these underrated (and underseen) films that the current feature is closest in animation style and a gentle macabre feel, far more benevolent than that of such obvious influences as Charles Addams and Edward Gorey. Through the work of Henry Selick and writers Michael McDowell (of *Beetlejuice*) and Caroline Thompson (of *Edward Scissorhands*), this feels like another of Burton's veiled experiments in autobiography (cf. *Edward Scissorhands*, *Ed Wood*), as it deals with the frustrations of a one-note creator who wants to break out and do something else, only to learn that he should stick with what he does best.

Considered 'risky' because of its 'darkness', *Nightmare* is actually far less unsettling in its implications than such 'unproblematic' Disneys as *The Little Mermaid* (message: it's all right to be a bitch if you're cute and privileged) or *The Lion King* (alpha males have a divine right to rule the jungle). Halloweentown does have its genuine nasties, like the infantile Frankenstein who created Sally, and the bag-of-worms Boogie Oogie (seemingly related to the cartoon incarnation of Cab Calloway who

once co-starred with Betty Boop). But most of its residents - from the two-faced mayor through sundry werewolves and vampires to uncategorisable Burton creations with all-round mouths and or too many eyes - are as mushy-hearted and eager to please as the wistful skull-on-a-stick Jack. Santa Claus, understandably cross for most of the film, seems far more a tyrant than the Pumpkin King and, regardless of the makers' stated or unconscious intentions, most audiences will derive far more pleasure from the hilarious gag sequences of Jack's gruesome Christmas presents terrorising a cross-section of multi-racial children than they will get from the perfunctory follow-up scenes showing Santa putting things right.

The grotesques in Burton's films are harmless and usually pathetically lovelorn, save for those bloated freaks (Penguin, Joker, Oogie Boogie) whose malevolence keeps the plot boiling. If his slight distance means that *Nightmare* seems like a film about rather than by Tim Burton, there are also signs that the collaborators, gaining the upper hand, have flattened out his tendency to all-over-the-show plotting and simplified his sometimes over-fussy designs. The streak of psychotic knowingness that will presumably overflow in the forthcoming *Ed Wood* is represented not only in an evocation of Ray Bradbury and *Mad Monster Party*, but in adapting the plot of the well-remembered cult diaster *Santa Claus Conquers The Martians*. Although a fragile conceit, *The Nightmare Before Christmas* is certainly more worthy of your attention than any Disney 2-D cartoon since *Basil - The Great Mouse Detective*, and has a rich, inventive score by Danny Elfman (who also provides Jack's singing voice), which shows just how inadequate the trite pseudo-Broadway muzak of Menken, Ashman and Rice has become.

Kim Newman

To Die For

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Peter Mackenzie Litten

Certificate
 Not yet issued
Distributor
 Metro Tartan
Production Company
 TDF
 In association with
 The London
 Lighthouse
 With the participation
 of British Screen
Executive Producer
 Stephen Garbutta
Producer
 Gary Fitzpatrick
Line Producer
 Ian Johnson
Production Co-ordinator
 Bettina Gracia
Post-production
 Co-ordinator
 Philippe de Luzy
Assistant Directors
 Doug MacDonald
 Philippe de Luzy
 Paul McEvoy
Screenplay
 Johnny Byrne
Story
 Paul McEvoy
 Peter Litten
Script Supervisor
 Laurence Chouquet
Script Editor
 Joy Lale
Director of Photography
 John Ward
Editor
 Jeffrey Assenault
Art Director
 Geoff Sharpe
Special Floor Effects
 Andrew Duebort
 John Humphreys
 Morag McLean
 Andrew Hopkinson
Special Animatronics
Effects
 Richard Pirakis
Digital Special Effects
 Supervisors:
 Andrew McDonald
 Dave Hughes
 Telecine Transfers:
 Gary Szabo
 Transfer Co-ordinator:
 Kevin Phelan
 Transfer Operator:
 Jessica Rufus
Optical Effects Director
 Nic J. Camecho
Costume Supervisor
 Else Curtis
Make-up
 Supervisor:
 Victoria Wright
 Darren Phillips
 Helen Lennox
Hairstylist
 Suzanne Stokes-Munton
Titles/Opticals
 General Screen
 Enterprises
Music
 Roger Bolton
Songs/Music Extracts
 "Queer Things are Happening to Me" by and performed by Ruth Wallis; "Insomniac" by Sonya Madan, Glenn Johansson, performed by Echobelly; "Don't You Want Me" by Felix; "The Quilt Theme" by Roger Bolton, performed by Matthew Connell; "Paradise"; "X Stream" by and performed by Nüw Idol; "Star" by Vince Clark, Andy Bell, performed by Erasure; "1000 Easy" by Tim Bricheno, David Tomlinson, performed

by XC-NN; "Every Little Time" by L. Parry. P. Gendler, performed by Shelley; "So Macho" by George Hargreaves, performed by Sinitta; "One More Kiss" by L. Parry, P. Gendler, performed by Julie Harrington; "Big Fun" by Peter Morgan, Dangerous Ground, performed by Dangerous Ground; "Keep on Pushing" by L. Parry, D. Laudat, performed by MBD; "Let the Good Times Roll" by Duncan X, Leo Fraser, performed by Sheep on Drugs; "Something Else" by J. Beerman, performed by Reception Music Company; "True Love" by Cole Porter, performed by Sinitta, Gary Martin; "Au Fond du Temple Saint" from "The Pearl Fishers" by Georges Bizet, performed by Bruno Lazzaretti, Roberto Serville, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra
Choreography
 Roy Rowlands
Sound Recordist
 Julian Dawton

Cast
 Thomas Arklie
 Simon
 Ian Williams
 Mark
 Tony Slattery
 Terry
 Dilly Keane
 Siobhan
 Jean Boht
 Mrs Downs
 John Altman
 Dogger
 Caroline Munro
 Mrs Pignon
 Gordon Milne
 Drop Dead Gorgeous
 Nicholas Harrison
 Siobhan's First Lover
 Ian McKellen
 Sinitta
 Quilt Documentary
 Narrators
 Paul Cottingham
 1st Pox Shirt Lifter
 Lloyd Williams
 Bodybuilder
 Robert Sturtz
 Chris
 Benjamin Sterz
 Man in Gym
 Brian Carter
 Leather Man
 Mark Hutchinson
 Hospital Visitor
 Janet Allen
 Ward Sister
 Nigel Fairs
 Mark Lookalike
 Robert Whitson
 Man in Cruise Bar
 Philip Curr
 Skinhead
 James Greaves
 Man in Lavatory
 Brian Ross
 Nick
 Tony London
 Richard Cope
 Dick Bradnum
 Yobs
 Ken Kennedy
 Mr Willoughby
 Andrew Kennedy
 Steve
 Alan Lowe
 Young Man in Club

Will Pollet
Young Mark
Wayne Amiel
Helio
Henrique da Silva
Go-Go Dancers
John Cannon
Jessie Biscuit
Brian Carter
Mike Shear
Jessie's Men
David Ingram
Archangel
Mark Ardell
Andy Spur
Carl Robinson

Tony MacDonald
Paul Kevin
Zeus
Danny boy
Dark Angel
The Bronze
Angels
Gary Martin
Additional Voice-over

9,090 feet
101 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour

Present-day London. When Mark dies of Aids, he leaves his lover, Simon, a TV repairman, the panel he was working on for the Aids Memorial Quilt. Spending little time mourning, Simon is soon out cruising in clubs, for which close friend Siobhan reproaches him. Yet, whenever Simon attempts to hook up with other men, he sees Mark's face - on another's shoulders or on a TV screen. Running home, he clears the flat of all traces of Mark, but reminders of him linger, including an old message on the answering machine, which only he can hear.

Simon brings a man home, but as they kiss, Simon's car alarm begins to wail, and lights and electrical equipment take on lives of their own. Later, in bed alone, Simon wakes up at somebody's touch, and discovers Mark there with him. He has returned, as a ghost - invisible to others - dismayed that Simon appears to have forgotten him so quickly. Mark proceeds to rearrange the flat in his image. Outside the flat, he interferes with Simon's attempts to flirt. The two vex each other.

When Simon's work mate Digger arrives to pick him up, Mark rebukes Simon for keeping his sexuality hidden from Digger. Later, after Digger has amused himself at the expense of a middle-aged homosexual, Simon invites him for a drink, taking him to a gay bar where he kisses a few friends and frightens Digger away. Walking home, Simon is confronted by a homophobic gang and only escapes a beating when Mark creates a diversion. But still Simon insists that Mark has to let him go, and tells him he never loved him.

Restless, Simon visits his mother. They talk about his late father, and how he hurt Simon by rejecting him for being gay. His mother shows Simon a letter her husband wrote just before his death, regretting painfully the break with his son. Simon rushes back to his flat, and begins to cry out for Mark. He returns and they kiss before Mark is collected by a group of angels. Simon begins to work on Mark's unfinished quilt.

To Die For is as much about bereavement as it is about HIV and the gay community. In relation to other 'Aids films', it shares with Richard Glatzer's *Grief* a concern with the effects of early death on the lover left behind. The narrative centres on Simon's response, and traces his difficulties in expressing grief. Or rather, the narrative seems driven towards persuading Simon to cry.

The film's premise appears straight-

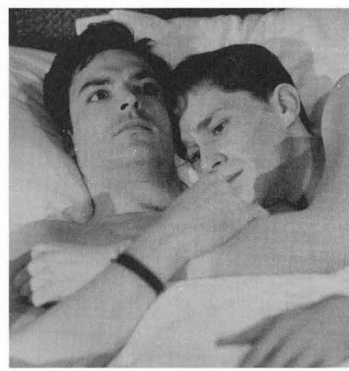
forward. Simon keeps his feelings in check because he has been hurt before, by his father. Equally simple is its resolution. When Simon realises his father's love, he can open up and grieve. Yet, between premise and resolution, the script - by Johnny Byrne who, among other TV credits, created *All Creatures Great And Small* - seems to develop by ignoring its own evidence, pulling us in one direction while what we see takes us in another. Ghost Mark is mostly tiresome (as is Alan Rickman's ghost in *Truly, Madly, Deeply*, a film whose tonal range, coupling humour with sentimentality, *To Die For* aims for). His behaviour seems designed to send Simon running all the more quickly to a pickup joint.

Of course, the convention of the ghost only being visible to the bereaved always invites us to read ghostly appearances as inner dialogue made flesh. In this case, Simon's summoning up anger directed at Mark's ghost could be interpreted as his attempt to fend off the pain he feels. But it's difficult to invest in this line, since although Mark is not seen or heard by others, the results of his interventions are. His supernatural forays only contribute to the film's uncomfortable mix of tones.

First-time director Litten, inspired to make the film by the death of a friend, moves between the would-be comic and the mawkish. The 'comic' takes in a quite stunning series of hackneyed characters. There's Siobhan, an Irish woman who loves the 'crack' and, fighting her body clock, is desperate for a man. Terry, the man, is a fool of a trendy leftie who gets entangled in PC terms he barely understands. Then there's Digger, Simon's crudely drawn homophobic work mate who crashes into another caricature, a middle-aged effete homosexual. Indeed the main couple itself - butch TV repair man and delicate professional - is straight out of pink central casting.

Litten is no more successful at tugging our heart strings. When, before the final twist, Simon tells Mark that he simply did not love him, the admission might not be heart-lifting but it is at least credible, given what has gone before. At the climax, however, with the music swelling (it does little else) and angels descending, the film lacks any persuasive force. Neither inevitable nor apt, the ending comes across as woozy wishful thinking.

Robert Yates



Under the quilt: Arklie, Williams

Weekend at Bernie's II

USA 1992

Director: Robert Klane

Certificate
12
Distributor
Warner Bros
Production Company
Victor Drai Productions
presents
An Artimm production
Executive Producer
Angiolo Stella
Producers
Victor Drai
Joseph Perez
Supervising Producer
Peter McIntosh
Co-producer
Don Carmody
Associate Producer
Howard Ellis
Production Co-ordinators
Paula Benson Himes
NY:
Soomi Marano
Production Manager
Tink Ten Eyck
NY:
Jim Finnerty
Location Manager
Samuel P. Tedesco
Location Co-ordinator
Bill Paul
Post-production Supervisor
Ron Payne
2nd Unit Director
Conrad E. Palmisano
Assistant Directors
Howard Ellis
Barry Howe
Susan Prince
J. Tom Archuleta
Marlene Arvan
Casting
Jason Lapadura
NY:
Debra Brown
Florida:
Unique
ADR Voice:
Barbara Harris
Screenplay
Robert Klane
Based on characters
created by Robert
Klane
Script Supervisors
Connie Papineau
2nd Unit:
Ashley Thomas Osler
Director of Photography
Edward Morey III
2nd Unit Director of Photography
Frank M. Holgate
Camera Operators
Robert La Bonge
Eric Zuker
Steadicam Operator
David Knox
Optical Effects
Title House
Supervisor:
Dave Gregory
Animation
Imagination Factory
Graz Entertainment
Editor
Peck Prior
Production Designer
Michael Bolton
Visual Consultant
Dan Sweetman
Art Director
Eric Fraser
Set Decorators
Scott Jacobson
Beth Kushnick
Set Dressers
John A. LaSandra
Christopher Lutz
Guido de Curtis
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Ken Speed

Costume Design
Fionn
Costume Supervisor
Eva Prappas
Make-up Supervisor
Lon Bentley
Make-up
Kona Bentley
Hair
Supervisor:
Lon Bentley
Stylists:
Mary Ann Valdes
Phyllis Sagnelli
Title Design
Bronco/Fox
productions
Michael Butkus
Music
Peter Wolf
Music Supervisor
Barry Levine
Music Editor
Thomas Kramer
Songs
"Dancin' Mood" by
Alphonsus Cassell,
performed by Arrow;
"Island Girl" by
Toriano Edwards,
Clarence Edwards,
performed by Burning
Flame; "Mamma Let
Go", "Kumm A Klele"
by Peter Wolf, Ina
Wolf, performed by
J.D. Nicholas; "Ocean
Blue" by Peter Wolf,
Ina Wolf, Jahmark
Dacosta, performed
by Jahmark Dacosta
Choreography
Adam Shankman
Sound Design
Harry Cohen
Supervising Sound Editor
Brad Blake
Dialogue/ADR Editor
Cathie Speakman
Sound Mixers
Walter Hoylman
2nd Unit:
Frank Stettner
Foley Mixer
Brian Geer
Dolby stereo
consultant:
Thom Ehle
Sound Re-recording Mixers
Ken Teaney
Scott Ganary
Sound Effects Editors
Ricardo Broadus
David Farmer
Foley Artists
Vince Nicastro
Greg Barbanell
Filmic Consultant
Bruce A. Block

Cast
Andrew McCarthy
Larry Wilson
Jonathan Silverman
Richard Parker
Terry Kiser
Bernie Lomax
Troy Beyer
Claudia
Barry Bostwick
Hummel
Tom Wright
Charles
Steve James
Henry
Novella Nelson
Mobu
Phil Cocciolletti
Gary Dourdan
Cartel Men
James Lally
Morgue Attendant
Michael Rogers
Island Cop

Stack Pierce
Claudia's Dad
Constance Shulman
Tour Operator
Jennie Moreau
Cedric Bones
Bank Executive
William Lucas
Store Clerk
Lance Durham
Hotel Beach Employee
Hillel E. Silverman
Maitre d'
Matt Locker
Porter
Ernestine Elena Vanterpool
Woman in Store
Robert R. Willis
EMS Worker

8,877 feet
97 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
DeLuxe

The body of murdered insurance executive Bernie Lomax finally makes it to the New York City morgue. However, the \$2 million Bernie stole from his company is still missing. Lomax's employees Larry and Richard identify the corpse and Larry obtains his effects, which include a deposit box key for a bank in the US Virgin Islands. Investigator Hummel suspects Larry and Richard of complicity in the fraud, has them fired, then tails them in a bid to track down the money.

Meanwhile, in the Virgin Islands, voodoo priestess Moboo orders small-time crooks Charles and Henry to raise Bernie from the dead using voodoo magic and then follow him to the missing loot. Charles and Henry steal the corpse, but when the chicken they need for the ritual escapes, they substitute a pigeon. This has the effect of animating Bernie only when loud music is playing. Charles and Henry lose the body on the subway; it is then returned to the morgue just in time for Larry and Richard to steal it. Arriving in the Virgin Islands with Bernie packed into a suitcase, the duo store him in the fridge of their holiday apartment.

On the beach, Larry strikes up friendship with local girl Claudia. That night, music from a party animates Bernie, who dances in a conga line. Larry and Richard eventually arrive at the bank with Bernie and gain access to the deposit box, which is empty save for a treasure map. Larry gives the map to Claudia; she passes it on to her father, who is in league with Hummel.

Captured by Moboo, Larry and Richard are given a poison which will kill them by midnight if they don't give her the map. After sundry disasters, the duo rig up Bernie with a personal stereo to keep him animated underwater. Larry, Richard and Claudia don skin-diving gear and follow him into the sea where he retrieves the money. On dry land, Larry harnesses up Bernie to pull a cart, which goes out of control and crashes into Moboo. The police and Hummel arrive and the loot is returned to them. The blood of a virgin is needed to save the ailing Richard; Larry duly obliges.

Aboard their new pleasure cruiser, Larry tells Richard that the missing loot was really \$3 million and that ►

◀ they can now share the other \$1 million. Bernie, meanwhile, dances in a carnival parade, which also includes Charles and Henry, now transformed by voodoo magic into animal form.

● An annoying sense of time warp afflicts this desperately contrived farce, made three years on from the original 1989 movie. The two stars look visibly older, but in terms of the narrative, those three years don't exist: their characters are still firmly locked into a materialistic late 80s world where a supposedly trendy job in finance means wearing coloured braces; where a vacation means eager, drooling smiles and a beach full of bikini-clad babes ("Oh my God, look at the tits on that one!" says Larry thoughtfully) and where vulgarity, stupidity and greed are presented as positive virtues.

As the relentlessly foolish heroes, McCarthy and Silverman are even more unappealing than in the first film, but the fact that they are both now far too old for the roles (the 30-year-old McCarthy as a virgin?) does add a certain flavourful absurdity to the slapstick low jinks the plot forces on them. Bringing Bernie back to life through the power of voodoo is an idea that has real comic possibilities: certainly many more than the first film's one-joke scenario of the duo having to laboriously pretend that his corpse is still alive. A more creative scenario might have seen Bernie shuddering back to life as a putrefying, Romero-style zombie bent on revenge on our two heroes. Unfortunately writer-director Robert Klane (who also scripted the first film) shies away from such ghoulish fun in favour of more beach frolics: Bernie becomes tangled up in a parasailing cable and gets dragged into the air, is dropped and knocked about a great deal, dances a conga and so on.

However, as in the first film, Bernie's fixed expression is no substitute for a personality and since he still hasn't got one, the plot becomes one interminable round of dropping him, losing him and making him jive up into life again every time there's a burst of loud music. The scene in which Charles and Henry resurrect him is the nearest the movie comes to an inspired moment. The burning candles mounted on their ghetto-blasters make for a genuinely comical bit of culture clash and the sequence set in a porn cinema – a man is watching the movie with a chicken, but it's not *their* missing chicken – is a casual spot of lunacy almost worthy of the Marx Brothers.

However, the villains Charles and Henry are sadly underused and whenever the story returns to Larry and Richard and their relentlessly juvenile antics, rigor mortis sets in. The last thing a good comedy needs is a logical plot, but it's the mark of a bad one that a bored audience will while its way through the running time picking holes in the slapdash scenario on offer. "Bernie's back... and he's still dead!" promises the poster. Indeed he is.

Tom Tunney

The Wings of Honneamise

Japan 1987/94

Director: Hiroyuki Yamaga

Certificate
15

Distributor
Manga Entertainment

Production Company
Manga Entertainment
In association with
Heolo Ltd & Animaze

Executive Producers
Toshio Okada
Shigeru Watanabe

General Producer
Makoto Yamashina

Producers
Hirohiko Sueyoshi
Hiroaki Inoue

Screenplay
Hiroyuki Yamaga

Director of Photography
Hiroshi Isagawa

Photography Supervisor
Iwao Yamaki

Character Design
Director of Animation

Yoshiyuki Sadamoto

Directors of Animation
Hideaki Anno

Fumio Iida
Yuji Moriyama

Editor
Harutoshi Ogata

Art Director
Hiromasa Ogura

Music
Ryuichi Sakamoto

Sound Director
Atsumi Tashiro

Sound Re-recorders
Shohei Hayashi

Sound Effects
Mitsuru Kashiwabara

English Production:
Producers

Ken Iyadomi
Keiji Kusano

Yutaka Masiba
Taro Yoshida

ADR Script Supervisor
Shigeru Watanabe

Translation
Neil Nadelman

Taro Yoshida
Nobuhiro Hayashi

Dolby stereo
In colour

English version
Japanese Title:

Oneamisu No Tsubasa

Digital Tracking:

Joe Romersa

Casting

Doug Stone Enterprises

Hannu Talent

Agency

Sound Direction

Shohei Hayashi

Sound Remixing

Yuldo Abe

Voices

Robert Matthews

Melody Lee

Lee Stone

Alfred Thew

Stevie Beeline

Steve Blum

Warren Daniels

Rudy Luzon

Arnie Hinks

Sunley Gurd Jr

Simon Issacson

Anthony Morfy

Christophe de Groot

Jonathan Charles

Jeff Frayer

Joe Montine

Mimi Woods

Werde Day

Jack Emmet

Dorothy Melendres

Tom Charles

Helen Storm

Richard George

Doug Stone

Thomas White

Don Martin

Jayne Allen

Bambi Durro

Joe Romersa

Lena Gale

Anthony Sintacrose

Jill Lyons

Dougary Grant

10,906 feet

121 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

English version

Japanese Title:

Ooneamisu No Tsubasa

● Shiro Lhadat, an idealistic young citizen of the Kingdom of Honneamano, has transferred from the country's navy to the Royal Space Force, a demoralised service suffering general ridicule after 20 years of failing to put an astronaut into space. Shiro meets a simple young woman who hands out religious pamphlets in the street and is attracted to her, though she remains determinedly chaste. When the commander of the RSF announces that a man will finally be launched into space and asks for volunteers, only Shiro stands. As the elderly and cranky advocates of space flight toil on the creation of a rocket, Shiro trains for the mission and becomes a celebrity.

When his girlfriend's house is bulldozed because she was in arrears on her electricity bill, Shiro begins to realise that the mission is being undertaken cynically. The scientific purpose of the flight has been corrupted by military involvement, which has seen the spaceship equipped with weapons and turned into an instrument of aggression. The launching site is placed in a



The right stuff: 'The Wings of Honneamise'

demilitarised border zone close to the neighbouring county of Ramada, which is occupied by Honneamano's greatest rival, the Republic. The Honneamano Emperor's advisors intend Shiro's flight as a lure to invite a Republican attack which they will be able to use as an excuse to invade Ramada. Republican agents try to assassinate Shiro, but he survives. The countdown is interrupted when Republican aircraft violate Honneamano air space, but Shiro insists the launch go ahead. From orbit, inspired by religious feelings, Shiro pleads that the countries of the world set aside their differences and make peace.

● Set on some other Earth where unrecognisable but archetypal nations go through familiar power politics and space remains unconquered, *The Wings of Honneamise* is most successful as an entry in one of the trickiest science fiction sub-genres, convincingly creating a world neither of the past nor the future and yet divorced from the actual present. Without the intrusion of any fantasy elements or even much in the way of scientific invention, the film nevertheless manages remarkably to envision a consistent, varied world in which almost every object – aircraft, trains, uniforms, windows, drinking vessels, television broadcasts, newspapers, books, money, spoons – is recognisable but somehow different from designs that actually exist. This extends to the Kingdom of Honneamano itself, as well as the less-seen Republic, which has elements of Imperial Japan and the United States but can truly stand in for neither, serving rather as an amalgam of any society with a tendency towards the dystopian.

Like downbeat futuristic science fiction, from *Brave New World* through *Fahrenheit 451* to 1984, the plot follows a fairly privileged member of an unjust society as he comes to realise how extensive are the problems of the masses he has barely seen. However,

Shiro does not react by joining the oft-mentioned but barely-seen 'radicals', but by throwing himself into the dream of space flight, embracing the enthusiasm of the naive boffins who have stuck by the programme through years of neglect. He finally rallies his comrades to defy the cynical purpose of their masters and turns the space flight into a plea for international peace, telling the world there are no borders visible from orbit. It is disappointing that the film's visual and political sophistication should be diluted by the most banal religious message imaginable, as Shiro and his almost interestingly-characterised girlfriend exhort passers-by and the entire planet to have faith in God. (The message is hardly vitiated by the film's invention of a non-specific religion, complete with creation myth, to go with its non-specific politics.)

As with many anime, there's a jarring foreignness to the drama, even odder since much of the film adopts Western models like *The Right Stuff* or *Destination Moon* – as in the hard-to-follow sub-plot which finds the sympathetic hero impelled almost to rape the heroine, who promptly brains him with a printing press, then sincerely solicits his forgiveness for her provoking his lusts.

On a technical level, *Honneamise* rates with the best Japanese animation, inclining towards the romanticisation of the mechanical seen in *Porco Rosso* rather than the cyberpunk nightmare of *Akira*. With subtle character work, individuality is bestowed upon a large cast mainly conceived as stereotypes, and there is a rare restraint in holding back the big effects for the finale. Unlike a lot of anime, this takes its time to tell its story, allowing detail to register, adopting a rhythm between exciting moments like Shiro's escape from several assassins and more contemplative character sequences as he is prodded by his relationship with the girl and an orphan in her charge to ask what his mission is all about.

Kim Newman

SHORT FILMS

The Black Cat

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Rob Green

Certificate
15
Distributor
Columbia TriStar
Production Company
Black Cat Films
Executive Producer
Leslie Jones
Producer
Sarah Carr
Associate Producers
Rob Green
Clive Perrott
Production Manager
Sarah Lane
Assistant Director
Steven Moore
Adaptation
Rob Green
Clive Perrott
Based on the short story by Edgar Allan Poe
Continuity
Suzanna Binding
Director of Photography
Simon Margetts
Camera Operator
Peter Fields
Animation
Clive Dawson
Editor
Kristina Hetherington
Production Designer
Tricia Stephenson
Art Director
Richard Campling
Art Department
Michelle Anslow
Lynn Bird
Robert Worley
Johnny Campling
Scenic Artist
Chris Evans

Costumes
Sally Parker
Make-up
Patti Harrison
Music
Russell Currie
Music Performed by
Orra Chamber
Orchestra and Chorus
Music Editor
Patrick Long
Sound Recordist
Les Darby
Re-recording Mixer
Michael A. Carter
Dubbing Editor
Colin Miller
Sound Transfer
Nick Pocock
Optical Consultant
Neil Mockler

Cast
Clive Perrott
Edgar Allan Poe
David Kincaid
The Inquisitor
Alison Morrow
Poe's Wife
Nick Devaney
Robby Locke
James McCusker
Neil Mockler
Ralph Perrott
Tony
Brian the Magician
Policemen/Crowd

1,820 feet
18 minutes

Dolby Stereo
In colour

Chained in a cell, a prisoner condemned to die the next day explains to a silent inquisitor how he came to his current state. Having conceived an inexplicable loathing of his wife's cat, the man murders the animal and is tormented by a creature which seems its reincarnation. When his wife tries to prevent him from killing the new cat, he kills her and bricks her corpse up in the cellar. While the police are searching, he shows his bravado by rapping on the new wall, prompting the cat (whom he has bricked up with the body) to wail, giving away the location of the corpse.

Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Black Cat' may be the most often filmed short story of all. It has inspired movies - many deviating greatly from the brief text - from Richard Oswald (who made the first version, in 1919's *Uncanny Tales*, which he remade in 1932), Edgar G. Ulmer (a 1934 classic with Karloff and Lugosi and very little Poe), Dwain Esper (the amazing grindhouse hit *Maniac*), Albert S. Rogell; Roger Corman (scrambling in 'A Cask of Amontillado' for an episode of *Tales of Terror* with Vincent Price and Peter Lorre), Harold Hoffmann, Sergio Martino, Lucio Fulci, Luigi Cozzi, and Dario Argento (half of *Two Evil Eyes* with Harvey Keitel), Rob Green and Clive Perrott deliver the most faithful filming yet: Perrott is made up to resemble Poe and recites almost all of the original prose, as brief flashbacks illustrate

rather than dramatise the events that have brought the protagonist to his wretched state. This is a rare reading of the story that grasps Poe's dry humour (the murderer reminisces that as a child he was the laughing stock of his friends because of his tender-heartedness towards animals) as well as his sense of impending insanity and gathering doom.

The soundtrack, augmented by a superb music score and a wonderful symphony of clanks and creaks, could almost function as a 'talking book' of the story, but Green effectively visualises the text, emphasising the physical shackles that bind the mad protagonist and symbolise his mental chains. When we see the murderer in the flashbacks, he trails the chains that he wears in the present, and in the build-up to his murder is even tripped up by them rather than the cat. An odd side effect of this is that the eponymous animal is not seen until a flash of animation at the finale, making this the only version of the story *not* to be full of close-ups of hissing and snarling pussycats straining after the significance the author weighs them down with. As a pure distillation of Poe, this is worthy of comparison with Edward Abrams and Jan Svankmajer's stabs at 'The Pit and the Pendulum' and the UPI cartoon of 'The Tell-Tale Heart'.

Kim Newman

Der schönste Busen der Welt (The Most Beautiful Breasts in the World)

Germany 1990

Director: Rainer Kaufman

Certificate
15
Distributor
Electric Pictures
A co-production with Munich Film School
Executive Producer
Thomas Wöbke
Producers
Thomas Wöbke
Rainer Kaufmann
Screenplay
Jürgen Egger
Based on a short story by Roland Topor
Continuity
Andrea Amdt
Director of Photography
Karl-Walter Lindenlaub
Editors
Christopher Roth
Rainer Kaufmann
Set Design
Gabi Pober
Inge Pober
Breasts
Colin Arthur
Costumes
Heike Hütt
Make-up
Stephanie Hilke
Special Make-up Effects
Hana Jürgen Schmelze
Titles
Thomas Elsner
Music
Nikolaus Glowna

Sound Mixer
Klaus-Peter Kaiser
Cast
Eva Kryll
Jeanette Apfel
Dominic Raacke
Simon Perelstein
Thomas Kylan
Porter
Takamasu Oyama
Mr Yakota
Toshi Kusaba
Secretary
Dietmar Schneider
Chef
Ossi Eckmüller
Brewer
Heinz Wanitschek
Toni
Friedrich von Thun
Plastic Surgeon
Rita Russek
Liv
Axel Milberg
Jeanette's Friend
Loredana Laini
Dress Maker
Undine Brixner
France
Katja Lührs
Editor

1,349 feet
15 minutes

In colour
Subtitles

Jeannette is a bright PA who would like to get on in the world. But her boss and the rest of the men she has to deal with at work seem more interested in her perfectly formed breasts than her mental aptitude. While staying at a hotel on a business trip she bumps into a man, Simon, in the lift. In that instant, Simon acquires her breasts. Jeannette is now happily flat-chested. A horrified Simon consults a plastic surgeon, who tells him that it would be a shame to remove such beautiful breasts. Jeannette impresses her boss by managing an important deal for the company. Soon she is promoted. She also has the confidence to leave her boyfriend. Meanwhile, Simon finds that he attracts a lot of attention from both men and women and rather enjoys his new found fame. He ends up on the cover of a women's magazine and there is the promise of a career in show-business. Later chance brings Jeannette and Simon back together. They bump into each other and Jeannette finds that she has her breasts back. Simon is bereft. The two try to engineer a way for him to have the breasts again, but to no avail. Meanwhile the two fall in love.

Made in 1990, Rainer Kaufman's short film preempts the current wave of features that deal with gender scrambling. This is a simple and pointed - so to speak - conceit about mammary fetishism. Like a live-action cartoon, though stylistically very straightforward, it examines how women become too easily reduced to their secondary sexual characteristics and how men might respond if they were scrutinised in the same way. It might also be every man's fantasy to have their very own pair of breasts to ogle at. The plastic surgeon that Simon visits exclaims that his new appendages are "the hottest tits I've seen". Meanwhile Jeanette, bereft of her breasts and more confident of her self-image, finds a new freedom and enjoys a boost in her career. This is depressing in itself, as once again it seems that such feminine attributes are a woman's burden but a man's boom.

Lizzie Francke

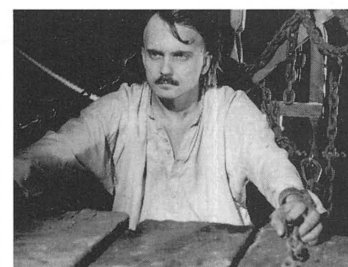
Super Grass

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Tom Vaughan

Certificate
Not yet issued
Distributor
Partners in Film
Production Company
Imagine Films
In association with Partners in Film
Production
Executive Producer
Simon Channing-Williams
Producer
Jonathan Rawlinson
Production Manager
Stephanie Faugier
Location Manager
David Robertson

Assistant Directors
Josh Robertson
Natasha Tahta
Casting
Stern & Parriss
Screenplay
Tom Vaughan
Based on an idea by Jonathan Rawlinson
Script Supervisor
Josie Fulford
Director of Photography
Patrick Duval
Additional Photography
Stephen MacMillan
Editor
Patrick Moore



'The Black Cat': Clive Perrott

Production Designer
Caroline Crawford
Costume Design
Sonya Lennon
Make-up
Kirstin Chalmers
Titles/Opticals
Barbara
Flinder/Peerless
Camera Company
Music
Sid Merrett
Dubbing Editor
Paul Knight
Foley Mixer
Ted Swanscott
Sound Recordist
Mathew Harmer
Sound Mixer
Mick Boggis
Sound Post-production
De Lane Lea
Foley Artist
Diane Greaves

Cast
Charlie Creed-Miles
Greg
Timothy Barlow
Neighbour
Sharon Duce
Mum
Nick Dunning
Dad
Norman Roberts
Derek
Noel Dyson
Anna Turner
Ursula
Hugh O'Donnell
David Robertson
Lee Marriot
Drugs Squad

1,090 feet
12 minutes

Hidden from the prying eyes of a nosey neighbour, a young man, Greg, lovingly tends a marijuana plant in his basement flat. His parents come to visit him. Greg gives them "herb" tea and home-baked biscuits. They become giggly and euphoric, and leave. Greg's paranoid friend Derek arrives, and they smoke a joint together before another knock on the door sends Derek scurrying out the back way. It's Greg's gran and her kleptomaniac friend Ursula. Ursula guesses the plant is "Peruvian parsley", and steals a frond before leaving. There is another knock on the door. This time it's the drug squad, and Greg is frog-marched out to join his parents, friend, gran and Ursula in the back of a police van. As the door slams shut on the confiscated plant, a cutting is chopped off and the nosey neighbour adds it to his own pot-plant collection.

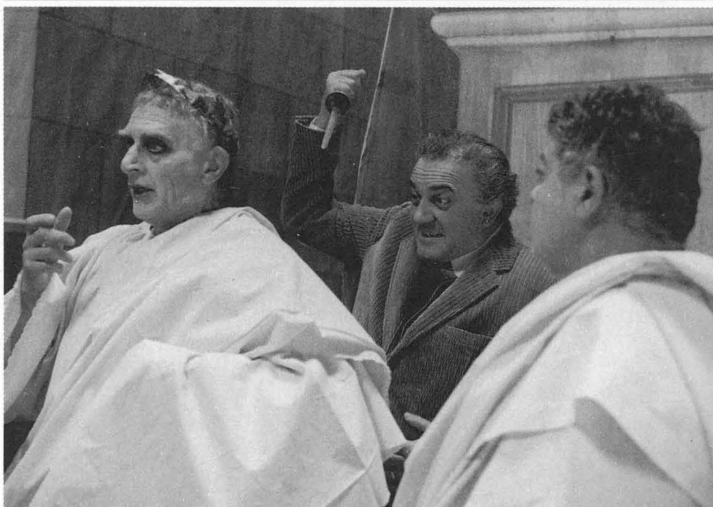
Written and directed by Tom Vaughan from an idea (note the singular) by producer Jonathan Rawlinson, this 12-minute short is as inconsequential and fundamentally harmless as the restricted substance whose virtues it champions. The production is defiantly professional, and the simple story is agreeably illustrated by Sid Merrett's jaunty banjo figure, which also supplies a nice bit of rhythm. The whole thing might have been a bit more interesting with another plant - perhaps an azalea - at its centre, but the performances, especially Charlie Creed-Miles' unhealthy-looking hero, do not make any claims that the script can't justify. If Derek's dopey proselytising ("Cigarettes and alcohol - they ain't subversive like this stuff!") is intended to be taken seriously, though, someone must have been smoking the props.

Ben Thompson

VIDEO

Mark Kermode and Peter Dean highlight their ten video choices of the month, and overleaf review, respectively, the rest of the rental and retail releases

VIDEO CHOICE



Rome in ruins: 'Fellini's Roma'

Fellini's Roma (Roma)

Director Federico Fellini/Italy/France 1972

A plotless, poetical and autobiographical blend of fact and fantasy, *Fellini's Roma* prefigures *Amarcord* in its portrayal of a community as a microcosm of Italy. The film teems with life; typically bizarre characters and splendidly choreographed crowd scenes are set against the constant buzz of the great city. Fellini cuts between his early memories of Rome – a slide show at school, arriving

at a train station for the first time, a bustling outdoor restaurant – and the reality of the modern city. A busy motorway bordered by vagrants, whores and belching fires epitomises the present, while a newly unearthed Roman villa, whose frescoes peel and and fade away when exposed to the foul, modern air, acts as a metaphor for Fellini's tarnished recall. (MFB No. 467)

● Retail: MGM/UA SO52328; Price £14.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15



Chasing dreams: Lamberto Maggiorani in 'Bicycle Thieves'

Bicycle Thieves (Ladri di biciclette)

Director Vittorio De Sica/Italy 1948

Bicycle Thieves stands out as one of the finest achievements of Italian neo-realist cinema. Unemployed Antonio (Lamberto Maggiorani) is hired as a bill-sticker, for which a bicycle is an essential tool. His bike is stolen on the first day of the job and in desperation, after a painstaking search, he resorts to stealing someone

else's. Antonio struggles to maintain his individuality but ends up losing his dignity and his job – a simple man plucked from the dole queue only to be thrown back into the crowd. The film's tight dramatic core, brilliant execution and detail of character serve to highlight De Sica's interest in the effect of political structures on the lives of ordinary people. A heart-wrenching tale. (MFB No. 192)

● Retail: Art House AHC 7003; Price £15.99; Subtitles; B/W; Certificate U

Dersu Uzala

Director Akira Kurosawa/USSR/Japan 1975

Essentially a *Boys' Own* adventure, *Dersu Uzala* is based on an account by Russian topographer Vladimir Arseniev (Yuri Solomin) of two expeditions into the Siberian taiga during the early part of this century. The group of men are saved from near disaster by old nomadic hunter Dersu Uzala (played with conviction by Maxim Munzuk), who lives in the forest and shares a unique affinity with nature. Dersu Uzala's appreciation of the natural world is contrasted against the scientific approach of the Russian soldiers as they try and 'capture' the landscape on their maps. Slow, majestic and beautifully shot in 70mm, Kurosawa's film transfers surprisingly well on to a small screen. (MFB No. 528)

● Retail: Connoisseur Video CR 169; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate U



Maxim Munzuk in 'Dersu Uzala'

Highway Patrolman (El Patrullero)

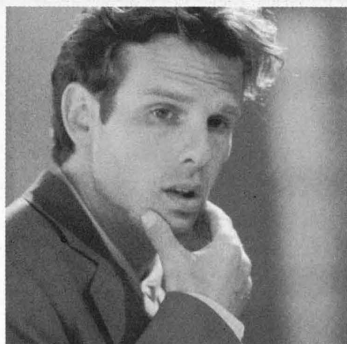
Director Alex Cox/USA/Mexico 1991

Cox is back on form with a film steeped in road movie conventions and which is as hip and tightly scripted as his biggest success to date, *Repo Man*. *Highway Patrolman* resembles Errol Morris' *The Dark Wind*, but his real model is – in narrative structure, incidental detail and with a similar inversion of audience expectations – James William Guercio's *Electra Glide in Blue*. Cox skilfully manages to create sympathy for corrupt South American cop Pedro Rojas (Roberto Sosa), a graduate from the National Highway Patrol Academy, armed with a diploma, rifle, beaded car seat cover and the belief that everyone he encounters will be guilty of something. Pushed by his wife into accepting bribes, Pedro reserves his dignity for the rescue of his prostitute mistress from poverty and drug addiction. In this independent production, made on location and with a modest budget, Cox appears relieved to be free from the shackles of big studio requirements. Without doubt, his most satisfactory film. (S&S September 1994)

● Retail: Tartan Video TVT 1177; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 15



Crook cop: 'Highway Patrolman'



Love fool: Peter Berg in 'The Last Seduction'

The Last Seduction

Director John Dahl/USA 1993

After being slapped around by her slimy crooked husband, villainess Linda Fiorentino steals the proceeds of their recent heist and scurries off to hide in a backwater town. Having made casual use of the town's men, she attempts to set up a business selling murder to the wives of cheating husbands, while her spurned spouse steadily closes in. Directed in glorious pulp style, this ironic modern *film noir* (which follows in the footsteps of the more mainstream *Red Rock West*) buzzes with kinetic energy and scathing black humour. Fiorentino is superb as the *femme fatale* whose sexy, murderous antics range from the delightful to the deranged. The story doesn't make sense in terms of realistic characters or situations, but the plot is watertight within the confines of its twisted logic. An absolute must for lovers of the outrageous. (S&S August 1994)

● Rental: ITC 8412; Certificate 18

Josh and S.A.M.

Director Billy Weber/USA 1993

With a theme too immature for cynical adults and too strange for children, this bizarre offering from Castle Rock nevertheless boasts material of poignant substance. Driven to despair by his dysfunctional extended family (including a selfish mother, an estranged father and bullying stepbrothers), angst-ridden Josh Whitney tells his younger brother Sam that he is a Strategically Altered Mutant, sold by his parents for government warfare. Perversely, Sam embraces the lie as it helps explain his aggression, obsession with death and emotional detachment from his parents. Although essentially a comedy, Frank Deese's script taps into a disturbing vein of common thought – namely, we all want to believe we are somehow different. Jowly newcomer Noah Fleiss beautifully carries the piece, ably portraying a child's sullen confusion when faced with a tawdry world. Odd, but not without charm. (S&S June 1994)

● Rental: PolyGram PG 1020; Certificate 12



A different child: 'Josh and S.A.M.'

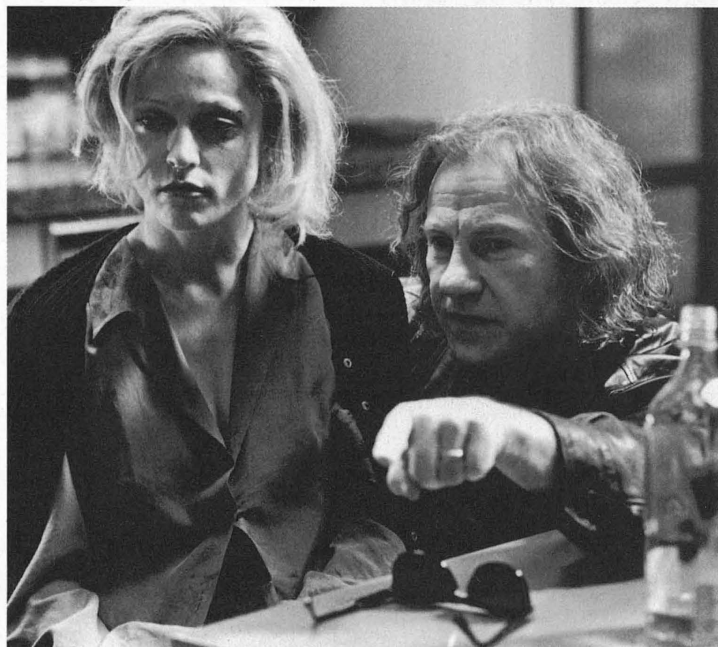
who plumbs the depths of depravity while attempting to make a film starring two unappetising actors (played by James Russo and Madonna). Madonna takes a genuine risk by playing an incompetent thespian who bed-hops her way into the director's heart, but justifies it by giving an impressive performance. Repulsive, but unmissable. (S&S June 1994)

● Rental: PolyGram PG 1025; Certificate 18

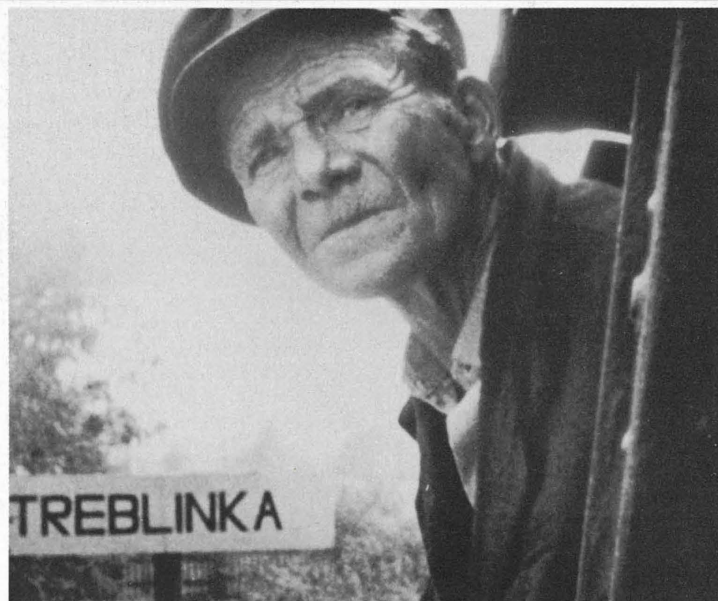
Dangerous Game

Director Abel Ferrara/USA 1993

Greeted with hoots of critical derision both here and in the States, Ferrara's most autobiographical – not to mention self-indulgent – movie to date is clumsy and unwatchable, but for Ferrara fans morbidly fascinating and irresistible. Harvey Keitel plays a rancid movie director (clearly fashioned on Ferrara)



To the edge: Madonna and Harvey Keitel in 'Dangerous Game'



The horrors of war revealed in Lanzmann's documentary 'Shoah'

Shoah

Director Claude Lanzmann/France 1985

A nine-hour documentary which examines the Nazis' mass murder of the Jews in the concentration camps during the Second World War. Instead of newsreel or archive footage – which Lanzmann feels has lost the power to shock – the events are recalled in a matter-of-fact manner by people who were there. Witnesses include a train driver who transported victims to Treblinka, a Jewish man who worked in the Auschwitz crematorium and an SS

guard. The director asks 'small' detailed questions that allow the film to build up layer by layer to create a large detailed picture of the institutionalised genocide. One of the most horrifying revelations is the clinical way in which the Nazis operated the final solution; Treblinka is described as "a primitive but effective production line of death" and Auschwitz as "a factory". A difficult, yet rewarding experience, Lanzmann's *Shoah* is a film which should be seen and will never be forgotten. (MFB No. 638)

● Retail: Academy CAV 020; Price £49.99; Subtitles: B/W; Certificate E



Fatherly advice: 'Innocent Moves'

Innocent Moves

Director Steve Zaillian/USA 1993

Children's championship chess is an unlikely subject for a riveting movie but *Schindler's List* scriptwriter Steve Zaillian, in his directorial debut, works wonders. Startled by his son's skill at chess, sportswriter Joe Mantegna enlists tutor Ben Kingsley to shape the boy's future. The child, however, favours the support of street-wise speed-chess player Laurence Fishburne whose rule-breaking style is inappropriate to championship competitions. Marvellously played by the ensemble cast and relative new face Max Pomeranc, Zaillian's quietly intelligent picture features all the thrilling tension of a sports movie, stimulating the grey matter and touching the emotions. After receiving only a limited theatrical release, this deserves to be rediscovered on video. US title: *Searching for Bobby Fischer*. (S&S January 1994)

● Rental: Paramount VHB 2854; Certificate PG

The Crow

Director Alex Proyas/USA 1994

Traditionally, comic book adaptations by Hollywood divide into big-budget mainstream blockbusters (*Superman*, *Batman*) or low-budget exploitation pics (*The Punisher*, *Swamp Thing*). *The Crow*, a nihilistic romp through the underbelly of gothic comic book culture, lies somewhere in between. Its audacious visual style – craggy cityscapes lit in shades of blue, red and black – suggests a protean Tim Burton, but the relentless violence and doom-laden tone set it in the grind-house market. As with *The Punisher*, the story lacks any discernible moral trajectory beyond vengeance – Eric Draven (Brandon Lee) returns from the grave a year after his murder by a gang who also raped and killed his girlfriend. Lee's tragic on-set demise lends a ghoulish air which will doubtless inspire cult status.

(S&S June 1994)

● Rental: EV EVV 1292; Certificate 18



Nihilistic romp: Brandon Lee in 'The Crow'

Reviews in *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound* are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

Ace Ventura Pet Detective

Director Tom Shadyac; USA 1993; Warner V013029; Certificate 12
Jim Carrey is insufferably wacky as a professional animal retriever in this leaden screwball comedy. Hired to track down a football team's missing dolphin mascot, Carrey exudes none of the zaniness that he is master of in *The Mask* and Sean Young is embarrassing in a supporting role. (S&S May 1994) □

Back in the USSR

Director Deran Sarafian; USA 1992; Warner V012642; Certificate 15
A confusing and somewhat ramshackle thriller which demonstrates little of the economic flair of the director's *Road Flower*. Noteworthy for its location photography, for which Sarafian enjoyed unprecedented access to Soviet institutions, and an air of authenticity which is enhanced by the footage of real store riots. (S&S May 1994)

The Chase

Director Adam Rifkin; USA 1994; FoxVideo 8603; Certificate 15
Television cameras watch fugitive Charlie Sheen and his spoilt hostage Kristy Swanson fall in love while racing the police to the Mexican border in a fast car. Rifkin's (aka Rif Coogan) MTV pop promo style – shaky camera, hasty pans and fatuous editing – doesn't divert from the utter lack of substance. (S&S July 1994)

Cool Runnings

Director Jon Turteltaub; USA 1993; Buena Vista D123252; Certificate PG
Unpretentious, enjoyable fun. An ex-champion bobsled winner (John Candy) is taken out of retirement to coach Jamaica's first winter Olympics team. Although predicated on a single joke – Jamaica is hot, bobsledding is a winter sport – Turteltaub and the engaging cast inject enough energy to stop the gag wearing thin. (S&S April 1994)

The Dark Half

Director George A. Romero; USA 1991; 20.20 Vision NVT 13653; Certificate 18
Adapted from a superior Stephen King novel, this latest horror offering from one of the genre's most respected directors fails to achieve the eerie magic of its thematic companion piece, *Misery*. A writer's alter-ego fights back after he attempts to turn his back on his pulp-fiction pseudonym. Romero's script is more sure-footed than his direction, intelligently condensing King's doorstopper into two hours, but visually this is mediocre fare. (S&S November 1993)

Grumpy Old Men

Director Donald Petrie; USA 1993; Warner V013050; Certificate 12
Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau

are reunited as cantankerous codgers fighting over the affections of glamorous neighbour Ann-Margret. Chucklesome, but it was probably more fun to make than it is to watch – as highlighted by the closing credit out-takes sequence which raises more laughs than the movie. (S&S June 1994) □

Kika

Director Pedro Almodóvar; Spain 1993; Electric Pictures E-0701R; Certificate 18
A convicted rapist, a trash television host and a bedraggled beautician romp around to no discernible end in Almodóvar's flashiest and weakest work. With breast-bursting costumes designed by Jean-Paul Gaultier and the inclusion of a controversial 'humorous' rape scene, *Kika* bludgeons the audience rather than shocks. For more daring, thought-provoking thrills check out *Pepi, Luci, Bom and the Other Girls On the Heap* or *Matador*. (S&S July 1994)

Needful Things

Director Fraser C. Heston; USA 1994; PolyGram PG 1022; Certificate 15
This easily surpasses the standard King schlock thanks to a script by W.D. Richter and with Ed Harris and Max Von Sydow sharing star billing, but still lacks genuine class (a fault mainly due to the shortcomings of King's novel). Richter struggles to tease a metaphor from the hokey tale, while Von Sydow wrings out every last drop of satanic wit in his portrayal of suave soul-catcher Leland Gaunt. (S&S August 1994)

Neil Simon's Lost in Yonkers

Director Martha Coolidge; USA 1993; 20.20 Vision NVT 19663; Certificate PG
Attention to period detail and handsome, well-judged performances raise this otherwise workaday adaptation of Neil Simon's stage play from the doldrums. Set during the Second World War, two children are sent to New York to live with their hardbitten grandmother (Irene Worth), dizzy aunt (Mercedes Ruehl) and spivvy uncle (Richard Dreyfuss). (S&S July 1994) □

No Escape

Director Martin Campbell; USA 1994; Guild G8769; Certificate 18
Sentenced to life imprisonment in a futuristic high security prison, convict John Robbins (Ray Liotta) is left to fend for himself among the marauding prisoners. A cross between *The Deadliest Game* and *Papillon*, this sci-fi action lacks originality but scores highly on set design and for its evocation of



Flying into danger: 'The Dark Half'



Survival of the fittest: 'No Escape'

an apocalyptic world. Liotta is a convincing anti-hero and ragged-faced Lance Henriksen adds genre appeal. (S&S June 1994)

Ruby in Paradise

Director Victor Nuñez; USA 1993; FoxVideo ML012R; Certificate 15
A teenage girl (Ashley Judd) flees her miserable home life and spends a summer of discovery in Florida. Lauded by the critics, Nuñez's whimsical rites-of-passage film suffers from the clichés of independent cinema – a rambling narrative, indulgent script and not knowing when to finish. However, on the plus side, Judd shows promise and the film bravely confronts the issue of sexual harassment. (S&S December 1993)

Rental premiere

Amelia Earhart: The Final Flight

Director Yves Simoneau; USA 1994; PolyGram PG 1042; Certificate PG; 90 minutes; Producer Cary Brokaw; Screenplay Anna Sandor; Lead Actors Diane Keaton, Rutger Hauer, Bruce Dern, Denis Arndt
Made-for-TV movie about the life and mysterious death of aviator Amelia Earhart (played by Diane Keaton) who crossed the Atlantic in 1928 and disappeared over the Pacific in 1937. Rutger Hauer joins her in the cockpit and Bruce Dern offers support as her husband and promoter George Putnam.

Geronimo

Director Roger Young; USA 1993; First Independent RE 7024; Certificate 15; 100 minutes; Producer Ira Marvin; Screenplay J.T. Allen; Lead Actors Joseph Runningfox, Nick Ramus, Michelle St. John, August Schellenberg
Although this made-for-TV epic coincides with the theatrical release of Walter Hill's *Geronimo: An American Legend*, the two projects have little in common. Unlike the John Milius scripted, big screen version, scriptwriter J.T. Allen deals with the reasons for Geronimo's distrust of white people (his family were butchered by the French) and his

eventual 'pacification'. Despite a tendency to preach, and questionable casting, occupation of the historical moral high-ground justifies the project.

Heart of Darkness

Director Nicolas Roeg; USA 1992; Reflective RE 7026; Certificate 15; 101 minutes; Producers Bob Christiansen, Rick Rosenberg; Screenplay Benedict Fitzgerald; Lead Actors Tim Roth, John Malkovich, Isaach De Bankolé, James Fox
After the delicious and excessive artistic license of Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, Roeg's relatively faithful rendering of Joseph Conrad's novella redresses the balance in favour of the author. Sadly, however, from the opening scene on the Thames to the confrontation with Kurtz (John Malkovich) in the 'Dark Continent', this television-style adaptation lacks the sparkle of Coppola, and indeed Roeg's earlier triumphs.

The Positively True Adventures of the Alleged Texas Cheerleader-Murdering Mom

Director Michael Ritchie; USA 1993; First Independent VA 20223; Certificate 15; 99 minutes; Producer James Manos Jrn; Screenplay Jane Anderson; Lead Actors Holly Hunter, Beau Bridges, Swoosie Kurtz, Matt Frewer, Fred Koehler
A media circus descends on a town after Texas mom Wanda Holloway is accused of plotting murder in order to ensure her daughter a place as a high school cheerleader. Inspired by a real event, Ritchie's inventive satire looks at the media's feeding frenzy instead of the alleged charges. Cutting between 'factional dramatisation' and an uncannily realistic interview with Wanda (excellently played by Holly Hunter) and her daughter, this posits a pushy mother, an uptight town and greedy journalists – all of whom are reprehensible. A welcome antidote to the usual true-life TV trauma fare.

Revenge of the Nerds IV: Nerds in Love

Director Steve Zacharias; USA 1994; FoxVideo 8609; Certificate PG; 87 minutes; Producer Doty Morehead; Screenplay Steve Zacharias, Jeff Buhai; Lead Actors Robert Carradine, Curtis Armstrong, Julia Montgomery, Ted McGinley
Dull trash lacking even the exploitative

Chance encounters

I was 15 when I first saw Antonioni's *L'eclisse*. It was screened for only one afternoon at the Tooting Classic. I skipped school games to go and see it and as a result got slapped into a two hour detention. The impact the film had on me in 1963 was devastating. It was unlike anything else I had seen, and it seemed to describe the kind of world into which we were moving – it was almost science fiction.

L'eclisse was made some months before the Cuban missile crisis and my memories of it are strongly linked to that terrifying week of nuclear brinkmanship. I think that a premonition of a looming, unidentifiable catastrophe was what made the movie so disturbing. It is difficult to communicate just how frightening that October in 1962 was at the time. We all lived under the threat of obliteration, the end of everything, *fini*. Subsequent international crises no longer felt so remote, each one could take the world to the brink again, and this time some maniac might press the button.

Antonioni's film was the first I saw that seemed to be made with acute awareness that the old myths, however comforting, were no longer adequate. It eschewed all certainties of characterisation, dramatic intent and narrative resolution. It was altogether a different sort of movie – it felt 'modern', its very fabric disturbed by an uncertainty that could now be said to underlie everything. This is not to reduce *L'eclisse* to being 'about' the nuclear threat (although a newspaper headline "The Atomic Age" appears as part of a montage during the film's climax, and is especially unsettling). Trying to describe what the film – or any other work by Antonioni – is about, is not a simple task as it can't be reduced to a plot synopsis, although it is definitely preoccupied with the narrative space between events, actions and intentional dialogue.

The opening scene is a long sequence set in an apartment showing two lovers,

Vittoria (Monica Vitti) and Riccardo (Francisco Rabal), at the end of a love affair. Worn out from talking all night and past the point of having anything further to say, they are unable to make the definitive break. Most films, I believe, would shoot the action prior to this – the night itself – but Antonioni is a director who focuses on what films leave out. Much of this scene is without dialogue. As it progresses, we increasingly become aware of an electric fan and, later, a razor. These objects, which in other movies would provide background noise, become under Antonioni's direction extraordinarily highlighted. He is one of the most sensitive film-makers to the use of sound; aircraft propellers, car engines, ringing telephones, opening and closing of doors, footsteps on stone floors, all carry weight, not for any pointed narrative purpose, but as evidence of the technologies we communicate with, the machines we travel in, the cities we inhabit and adapt to.

There is a story in *L'eclisse*, but its emphases are similarly elsewhere than usual. Monica Vitti leaves the apartment and begins a walk that lasts, in a way, for the majority of the film. Her journey is without any particular destination, a series of detours, explorations and, most importantly, distractions. These distractions are the substance of the story and include a brief relationship with Alain Delon.

A characteristic Antonioni sequence is the flight in a small four-seater plane from Rome to Verona during which we listen in to a virtually inaudible conversation. Nothing happens in the conventional sense; the journey, which takes considerable film time, appears to have no dramatic aim or climax, sounds and images take over and become the dramatic content. As with Vitti's character, the film has a wandering, searching quality. Antonioni has been described as "the poet of alienation", and this is shown by Vittoria's detachment from the world – which may be

interpreted as either a sign of health or equally of neurosis.

There are two sequences, both set in the Borsa (the Rome stock exchange), which constitute the hub of the film. This is the world inhabited by Alain Delon's character Piero, a young stockbroker. It is observed with an anthropological eye for detail. Only in the stock exchange are people shown to be full of passion, energy and action; it is an emphatically male world, preoccupied with money, profit and deals, and one in which Delon is comfortable. Duration is an important component of Antonioni's style (the park in *Blow-up*, the desert house in *Zabriskie Point*, the rocky island in *L'avventura*, the space outside the hotel at the end of *The Passenger*). He films the Borsa with relentless curiosity, as if to say, "look long enough and perhaps this place may reveal something of itself."

If the narrative finds its organisation around the brief affair between Delon and Vitti, it is something of a shock when both characters simply slip out of the film altogether. The final time the couple are seen together, they make an arrangement to meet on a street corner. Neither one turns up, but the camera does. For a full seven minutes it records the world that carries on without them. Passers-by, seen in earlier scenes, take their regular walks; buses pull up, stop, drop passengers and drive on. Twice a person who might be Monica Vitti or Alain Delon turns out to be someone else. The streets empty and darken as day turns to dusk. This is an extraordinary sequence, acknowledging that it has lost both the original characters and the narrative. Other lives, which we know nothing about, cross the screen and disappear, leaving in the end just the city – functioning, automatically, part of a vast man-made machinery, within which individuals find temporary escape and pleasure in passing sensations of motion and contact. It is a chilling viewpoint. *'L'eclisse'* is available on the Art House video label

titillation of its more 'adult' predecessors. Irritating nerd Booger gets engaged to a rich society girl whose brother attempts to scupper the marriage. Video cameras and strippers are duly hired.

The Substitute Wife

Director Peter Werner; USA 1994; PolyGram 1043; Certificate 15; 90 minutes; Producer Michael O. Gallant; Screenplay Stan Daniels; Lead Actors Farrah Fawcett, Peter Weller, Lea Thompson
A dying mother, devoted children and a hooker with a heart of gold are all present in this painfully plotted soap opera set in the nineteenth century. A terminally-ill woman encourages her husband to have a relationship with a prostitute so that the family will continue after her death.

Taking the Heat

Director Tom Mankiewicz; USA 1992; PolyGram 1038; Certificate 18; 87 minutes; Producers Gary Hoffman, Neal Israel; Screenplay Dan Gordon; Lead Actors Tony Goldwyn, Lynn Whitfield, George Segal, Peter Boyle, Alan Arkin
When an uptight yuppie is asked to testify against a New York gang boss, his reluctance to take the stand leads him and a police sergeant into a day of deadly japes. Mankiewicz's by-numbers action comedy is hardly original, and Goldwyn and Whitfield are not the best of odd couples, but this is watchable thanks to Alan Arkin popping up as a homicidal golfer from hell.

To Dance With White Dog

Director Glenn Jordan; USA 1993; Odyssey ODY 400; Certificate U; 87 minutes; Producer Glenn Jordan; Screenplay Susan Cooper; Lead Actors Jessica Tandy, Hume Cronyn
Emmy-heavy TV heart-warmer featuring Jessica Tandy, co-starring with her husband Hume Cronyn, in one of her final performances. After his wife dies, amiable old-timer Sam Peek is enraptured by a mysterious white dog which his family believe to be a figment of his grieving imagination. A movie to be watched with a big box of tissues handy.

Vault of Horror I

Directors Joel Silver/Russell Mulcahy/Tobe Hooper; USA 1994; Hi Fliers HFV 330; Certificate 18; 80 minutes; Executive Producers Richard Donner, David Giler, Walter Hill, Joel Silver, Robert Zemeckis; Screenplay Fred Dekker, Scott Nimerero, A.L. Katz, Gilbert Adler; Lead Actors Joe Pesci, Bill Paxton, Brad Dourif, Michael Lerner, Whoopi Goldberg, James Remar

Three surprisingly gory tales from a cable TV series, inspired by the ghoulish cartoons of William M. Gaines, featuring voodoo magic, mutilated ice-cream men, necrophilia and chainsaw-wielding babes in bikinis. Joel Silver's seedy opener (lensed by *Speed* director Jan de Bont) and Mulcahy's stylish sandwich-filler are treats, but Tobe Hooper's limp third segment lets the side down. If only British television was more like this!

The Wrong Man

Director Jim McBride; USA 1992; PolyGram PG 1037; Certificate 18; 105 minutes; Producers Chris Chesser, Alan Beatty; Screenplay Michael Thoma; Lead Actors Kevin Anderson, Rosanna Arquette, John Lithgow
What on earth attracted such respectable names as Lithgow, McBride and Arquette



Lovers and strangers: Monica Vitti and Alain Delon in Antonioni's extraordinary film of alienation 'L'eclisse'

to this sleazy movie? An American (Anderson) in Mexico, wrongly suspected of murder, hitches a ride with a grumpy eccentric compatriot (Lithgow) and his bimbo spouse (Arquette) who sheds her clothes, pouts like a baboon and frequently waves her ample assets. Anderson looks on stoically, leaving it to Lithgow to save the day as a rancid old bastard. A 24-carat skeleton in the closet which will certainly embarrass all those involved.

Retail

Addams Family Values

Director Barry Sonnenfeld; USA 1993; Paramount VHB 2851; Price £12.99; Certificate 15 (S&S February 1994)

And the Band Played On

Director Roger Spottiswoode; USA 1993; ITC ITC 0101; Price £12.99; Certificate 15 (S&S April 1994)

Bodies, Rest & Motion

Director Michael Steinberg; USA 1993; Electric Pictures E-069; Price £15.99; Certificate 15 (S&S February 1994)

Boiling Point

(3-4x Jugatsu/San tai Yon x Jugatsu)

Director Takeshi Kitano; Japan 1990; ICA Projects ICAV 1013; Price £13.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18
Kitano's second film is an uneven, eccentric tale which, with its Tokyo/Okinawa location split, playful beach sequence and disjointed final half, anticipates the superior *Sonatine*. Masaki (Masahiko Ono), a no-hope petrol pump attendant, dreams a revenge plot against the yakuza who rule his Tokyo suburb. The film nurtures a slow, careful build-up of character and plot, but the bizarre characters encountered along the way (especially a gangster played by Kitano) tip the film towards farce. (S&S August 1994)

Carmen

Director Carlos Saura; Spain 1983; Phase One POV 001; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate PG
Welcome re-release of Saura's swirling, passionate dance adaptation of Bizet's opera. Life imitates art when director/choreographer Antonio (Antonio Gades) falls in love with the star (Laura del Sol) of his flamenco production of *Carmen*. (MFB No. 601)

Ciao, Federico!

Director Gideon Bachmann; USA/Sweden 1970; Academy CAV 018; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate PG
Infuriating *vérité* documentary made during the shooting of *Satyricon* by Fellini's friend, American film-maker Gideon Bachmann. Bachmann trips up by trying to make the film as off-beat as its subject matter, while paying too little attention to Fellini's *modus operandi*. Only for Fellini completists. (MFB No. 449)

Cria cuervos (Raise Ravens)

Director Carlos Saura; Spain 1975; Art House AHO 6032; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
A brave work focusing on how a nine-year-old girl copes with the concept of



Gentle ghosts: Geraldine Chaplin and Ana Torrent in 'Cria cuervos'

mortality. Ana (Ana Torrent), after witnessing the death of her father, believes she is responsible. The girl forms a magical bond with her deceased mother (Geraldine Chaplin), who appears to her daughter in a series of visions. The director's interweaving of dreams with reality, combined with a critique of Franco's regime, recalls Victor Erice's *The Spirit of the Beehive*. (MFB No. 536)

Fellini Satyricon (aka Satyricon)

Director Federico Fellini; Italy/France 1969; MGM/UA SO 51385; Price £14.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18
Two students in ancient Rome go their separate ways after quarrelling over a beautiful boy. Adventures on their respective journeys include a battle with the Minotaur, imprisonment and an outrageous orgy which shows Fellini at his most self-indulgent. *Satyricon* is adapted from Petronius' scabrous portrait of the immorality of pre-Christian Rome. Fellini uses the tale to heap scorn on contemporary mores. However, the result is one of his more overblown and tedious works. (MFB No. 441)

La Femme infidèle (The Unfaithful Wife)

Director Claude Chabrol; France/Italy 1968; Art House AHO 6010; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Made after the success of *Les Biches*, this is the first in Chabrol's 'Hélène series', starring his then wife Stéphane Audran. An intricate study of infidelity and murder, with Michel Bouquet as a successful businessman who kills his spouse's lover in an attempt to save his marriage. (MFB No. 427)

Golden Balls (Huevos de oro)

Director Bigas Luna; Spain 1993; Tartan Video TVT 1152; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 18
Following his art-house hit *Jamón, Jamón*, Luna again mixes food and sex metaphors in this satire on Spanish machismo and ambition. A skyscraper which construction entrepreneur Benito González (Javier Bardem) dreams of building in Benidorm – and never quite succeeds in erecting – is just one of many phallic motifs that are playfully littered through the film. True to the spirit of the construction industry, *Golden Balls* has a half-finished, chaotic feel, especially the ending when Benito flees to Miami. (S&S July 1994)

The Hawk

Director David Hayman; UK 1992; PolyGram 0850163; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S December 1993)

How To Be a Woman and Not Die in the Attempt (Como ser mujer y no morir en el intento)

Director Ana Belén; Spain 1991; Curzon CV 0047; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Although Carmen Maura gives a splendid central performance as a woman again on the verge of a nervous breakdown, it is difficult to imagine non-Spanish audiences fully enjoying this mediocre drama about a writer's determination to overcome professional and domestic crises. Based on the novel by Carmen Rico-Godoy, this unfortunately doesn't translate to the screen as effectively as Nora Ephron's *Heartburn* which covered similar ground. (S&S July 1994)

Ikiru (Living)

Director Akira Kurosawa; Japan 1952; Connoisseur Video CR 167; Price £15.99; Subtitles; B/W; Certificate PG
Takashi Shimura is mesmerising as Watanabe, chief of the Citizens' Section in the Town Hall, who discovers he has only six months to live, and decides to get the most out of his time. Taking inspiration from an ex-employee, he cuts through bureaucratic red tape to build a park in a poor area of Tokyo. It's unusual to find Kurosawa addressing modern social concerns, but even within a contemporary setting his historic sense of honour and tradition is maintained. Of note are the sequence in which a drunk takes Watanabe for a night on the town, and a wake scene in which his colleagues realise their lack of moral courage. Aka *Doomed*. (MFB No. 307)

In the Soup

Director Alexandre Rockwell; USA 1992; Tartan Video TVT 1174; Price £15.99; B/W; Certificate 15
First time on video for the original black and white version (the rental release is in colour) of this engaging comedy. Seymour Cassel steals the show as a dubious financier who helps a young film-maker (Steve Buscemi) realise his dreams. (S&S November 1993)

The Man Without a Face

Director Mel Gibson; USA 1993; EV EVS 1137; Price £12.99; Certificate 15 (S&S December 1993)

Motherhood

Director Jonathan Wacks; USA 1992; ITC ITC 8406; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S Video June 1994)

Much Ado About Nothing

Director Kenneth Branagh; UK 1993; EV EVS 1134; Price £29.95; Widescreen; Certificate PG
Limited edition box-set featuring *Chasing*

the Light, a documentary about the making of the film. (S&S September 1993)

Naked

Director Mike Leigh; UK 1993; Channel Four Films VA 30409; Price £12.99; Certificate 18 (S&S November 1993)

Les Noces rouges (Blood Wedding)

Director Claude Chabrol; France 1973; Art House AHO 6011; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Continuing Chabrol's 'Hélène' cycle (see above, *La Femme infidèle*), an assistant to a small town mayor has an affair which leads to blackmail and murder. (MFB No. 478)

The Piano

Director Jane Campion; Australia 1993; EV EVS 1140; Price £29.95; Certificate 15
A limited edition box-set which includes a copy of the original film script. (S&S November 1993)

Plein Soleil (Blazing Sun)

Director René Clément; France 1959; Lumiere 2172; Price £14.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Based on Patricia Highsmith's famous novel *The Talented Mr Ripley*, an excellent film noir which manages to stay truthful to its genre despite a Mediterranean setting normally associated with the European caper film. Tom Ripley (Alain Delon) assumes the identity of his friend Philip (Maurice Ronet) after killing him at sea. With a nod towards *Knife in the Water*, Ripley plays mind games with Philip and his girlfriend aboard their yacht, but once on land his scheme runs amok. Delon's dangerous good looks help him carry the difficult job of making his character repulsive and attractive at the same time. (MFB No. 330)

Romper Stomper

Director Geoffrey Wright; Australia 1992; Medusa Pictures MED 13272; Price £13.99; Certificate 18 (S&S April 1993)

La scorta

Director Ricky Tognazzi; Italy 1993; Tartan Video TVT 1162; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18
Watchable and with an effective verisimilitude, but this based-on-fact tale about a bodyguard to an important Sicilian judge simmers without ever reaching boiling point. Angelo Mandolesi requests a transfer to Sicily to take the place of his murdered colleague. After a frosty start, the police protection team form a strong bond, aware that the political powers and mafia could pounce at any time. (S&S May 1994)

The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb

Director David Borthwick; UK 1993; Manga MANV 1058; Price £11.99; Certificate 12
Proof that the British animation scene is alive and kicking, this well-crafted re-telling of the fairytale mixes animation and actors. In an *Eraserhead*-style nightmare world a woman gives birth to a mutant boy who is used for experiments in a laboratory. (S&S January 1994)

Slaughter of the Innocents

Director James Glickenhaus; USA 1993; EV EVS 1136; Price £10.99; Certificate 18 (S&S Video March 1994)

ENDNOTES

By Mark Kermode

● In the liner notes to the *Forrest Gump* soundtrack album, a historical pop anthology *par excellence*, director Robert Zemeckis and writer Eric Roth state that "The music of *Forrest Gump* is as vital as any character – it's a character... the essence of what we once were and will always be." Perhaps more than any other art form, pop music is a transient product which reflects, mimics and occasionally shapes the zeitgeist of the moment. As such, it can serve film directors as a unique tool in the evocation of the past five decades of social history. Martin Scorsese once described the soundtrack to *Mean Streets* as a collection of songs from his New York youth (most notably The Rolling Stones' 'Jumping Jack Flash' and The Ronettes' 'Be My Baby') which for him still evoke exactly the world he was attempting to portray. In the nostalgic horror yarn *Christine* John Carpenter explored this magical power to conjure a bygone age as a 1958 Plymouth Fury allows its ghoulish memory to seep into (and transform) the modern world via its radio, which plays nothing but wall-to-wall 50s favourites. According to producer Steve Woolley, pop music in movies is the cheapest form of period scenery, or "wallpaper"; if you can't afford the sets, slap on a period tune, and the audience will imagine the rest. (Witness *Quadrophenia*, set in 1964, in which the appearance of modern buses and cinemas showing *Grease* are easily obscured by a soundtrack blaring Booker T. and early Who.)

The quintessential 'musical wallpaper' movie is George Lucas' 1972 hit *American Graffiti*, which follows the angst-ridden antics of a group of teenagers in the San Joaquin Valley, marauding together for one last time on the final night of summer 1963. Other more recent musically located period pieces include *Stand By Me* (1986), *Let Him Have It* (1991) and *The Book of Love* (1990), all of which hark back to the 50s, *Scandal* (1988) and *Withnail & I* (1986), which revel in the unmistakable sounds of the 60s, and *Dazed and Confused* (1993), *My Girl* (1990) and *In the Name of the Father* (1993), which unlikely trio all rely heavily on 70s hits to establish an authentic sense of cultural history.

Now *Forrest Gump* adds its name to the roll-call. The film follows its eponymous 'idiot savant' anti-hero as he stumbles through American social and political history from the 50s to an uncertain future. Director Zemeckis first demonstrated his flair for the intelligent use of pop music in *Back to the Future* (1985) uses 50s pop to illustrate its time-travelling motif. *Forrest Gump* is a far more complex work in which the hits to chronicle the changing nature of America while serving as an ironic, subversive counterpoint to Gump's naive commentary. Epic's handsome two-CD soundtrack album excellently anthologises this material, comprising 31 (not 32 as the sleeve mistakenly claims) classic Stateside hits, from Elvis Presley's ground-breaking 'Hound Dog' to Bob Seger's melancholic 'Against the Wind', via The Doors' bloated 'Break on Through', The Byrds' epoch-making

'Turn, Turn, Turn' and Lynyrd Skynyrd's infectious but frankly ludicrous 'Sweet Home Alabama'.

While the early tracks bubble with positive energy, those chosen to accompany Gump in Vietnam and afterwards back home pack the most poignant punch. In this respect Zemeckis is following a trend which first flourished in the 80s. In American cinema, the Vietnam War has repeatedly been fought to the nihilistic strains of Jimi Hendrix and The Doors: *Apocalypse Now* opens ominously (and ironically) to the droning tones of The Doors' 'The End'; *Platoon* was trailed using images of bloody combat overlaid with the jarringly sweet and tender sounds of Smokey Robinson's 'Tracks of My Tears'; even Barry Levinson's flimsy *Good Morning Vietnam* (1986) laboured the point that while American radio was blaring 'I Feel Good', the country was gearing itself up for international humiliation. Similarly, *Forrest Gump* opens its Vietnam sequences to the typical strains of Hendrix's 'All Along the Watchtower'; yet the soundtrack CD omits this, offering instead the more affecting Beach Boys' 'Sloop John B.' (with its baleful "I wanna go home" refrain), and Creedence Clearwater's obvious but nonetheless welcome 'Fortunate Son'.

It's true, then, that *Forrest Gump* does little to redefine the use of period pop in films, in the manner of Lynch or Tarantino. Yet the success of *Gump* lies in the fact that it retreads old ground in a manner so accomplished as to put the majority of its predecessors to shame; Zemeckis may not be an innovator, but he is an accomplished craftsman who has learned well from the experiments of others. At a time when pop compilation soundtrack albums have become dominated by the modern tedium of *Beverly Hills Cop III* (INXS, Terence Trent D'Arby), the witless retrospection of *Wayne's World II*, and the marketing ploys of 'Songs From and Inspired by' *Speed* and *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, the *Forrest Gump* soundtrack is cause for celebration. The 'Forrest Gump' soundtrack is on Epic Records



Subversive naivety: 'Forrest Gump'

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

Director David Hand; USA 1937; Walt Disney Classics D215242; Price £15.99; Certificate U (S&S August 1994) ☐

Soft Top, Hard Shoulder

Director Stefan Schwartz; UK 1993; PolyGram 6312283; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S January 1993)

Surf Ninjas

Director Neal Israel; USA 1993; EV EVS 1135; Price £10.99; Certificate PG (S&S April 1994)

Tombstone

Director George P. Cosmatos; USA 1993; EV EVS 11421; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S March 1994)

The Wedding Banquet (Xiyan)

Director Ang Lee; Taiwan/USA 1993; Mainline ML 014; Price £15.99; Certificate 15 (S&S October 1993)

We Don't Want to Talk About It

(De eso no se habla)
Director Maria Luisa Bemberg; Argentina/Italy 1993; Artificial Eye ART 101; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate PG
In this tale of a bizarre love triangle, Bemberg deviates from her usual theme of women's position in patriarchal society. Marcello Mastroianni stars as Ludovico D'Andrea, an ageing bachelor who sets his sights on the dwarf daughter of an overprotective, widowed storekeeper. (S&S September 1994)

Wild Target (Cible é mouvante)

Director Pierre Salvadori; France 1993; Tartan Video TVT 1181; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 15
This comic policier begins promisingly with Jean Rochefort's oddball hitman Victor kidnapping a parrot after carrying out his first and only successful assassination, but then takes a dive to turn into a turgid Gallic farce with Victor falling in love with his kleptomaniac target. (S&S August 1994)

Retail premiere

A Better Tomorrow II

Director John Woo; Hong Kong 1987; Made in Hong Kong HK 008; Price £12.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 18; 100 minutes; Producer Alawn Lai; Screenplay John Woo; Lead Actors Chow Yun-Fat, Leslie Cheung, Ti Lung
Woo pays homage to Peckinpah in this story of male bonding between two brothers (a restaurateur and his uncle) who take on the local triads. Woo's fascination with duplicity – especially with cop and criminal being two sides of the same coin – manifests itself with the brothers both working undercover but for different purposes. The mesmerising shoot-out at the conclusion makes up for any shortcomings in the plot which depends heavily on a knowledge of the original film.

The Dark Side of Love (Fotografando Patrizia)

Director Salvatore Samperi; Italy 1985; Jezebel JEZ 008; Price £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate 18; 88 minutes; Producer Pietro Innocenzi; Screenplay Riccardo Ghione, Edith Bruck, Salvatore Samperi; Lead Actors Monica Guerritore, Lorenzo Lena, Saverio Vallone

This hackneyed coming-of-age drama about a teenage boy's sexual awakening is surprisingly well shot, boasting first rate interiors, lighting and cinematography in the style of Tony Scott.

Drunken Master (Tsui Chuan)

Director Yuen Woo-Ping; Hong Kong 1978; Made in Hong Kong HK 012; Price £15.99; Certificate 15; 107 minutes; Widescreen; Producer Ng See Yuen; Screenplay Hsiao Lung; Lead Actors Jackie Chan, Hwang Jang Lee, Yuen Siu Tien
Jackie Chan's athleticism is the highlight of this humdrum martial arts vehicle. Dragon-Nose (Chan) saves his honour with some fancy footwork.

Five Venoms

Director Chang Cheh; Hong Kong 1978; Made in Hong Kong HK 020; Price £15.99; Certificate 18; 98 minutes; Widescreen; Producer Mona Fong; Screenplay Yi Kuang, Chang Cheh; Lead Actors Chang Sheng, Lu Feng, Wei Pai, Sun Chien, Lo Meng, Kuo Chui
A 'snake-fist' style martial artist enlists the help of his master to find the 'Poison' gang. Good fight sequences are marred by terrible comedy and poor dubbing.

Mississippi Blues

Directors Bertrand Tavernier/Robert Parrish; France/USA 1983; Arrow AV 015; Price £15.99; Certificate PG; 96 minutes; Producers Bertrand Tavernier, Yannick Bernard
Well meaning, but ponderous and somewhat aimless documentary which looks at the life of African-Americans in Mississippi, concentrating on the role of music and the church in the community.

Snake in the Eagle's Shadow

Director Yuen Woo-Ping; Hong Kong 1978; Made in Hong Kong HK 011; Price £15.99; Certificate 18; 94 minutes; Widescreen; Producer Ng See-Yuen; Screenplay Hsi Hua-An, Tsai Chi-Kuang; Lead Actors Jackie Chan, Yuen Siu Tien, Hwang Jang Lee
An old 'eagle' martial arts master trains Jackie Chan to ensure the survival of the discipline which is under threat from the 'snake-fist' style.

La terra trema

Director Luchino Visconti; Italy 1948; Connoisseur Video CR 166; Price £15.99; Subtitles; B/W; Certificate PG; 155 minutes; Producer Salvo d'Angelo; Screenplay Luchino Visconti, based on the novel 'I Malavoglia' by Giovanni Verga
Shot in the fishing village of Acì Trezza with non-professional actors speaking in Sicilian dialect, *La terra trema* centres on a family who stand to lose their home when their boat is wrecked in a storm. Visconti wears the film's Marxist message on his sleeve, stating in the introduction that this "is a story about man's exploitation of man." Although, not a big success in Italy, elsewhere it was hailed as a magnificent achievement. First time release for the original Sicilian version with subtitles.

Vroom

Director Beeban Kidron; UK 1988; Channel Four Films VA 30410; Price £12.99; Certificate 15; 89 minutes; Producer Paul Lister
Screenplay Jim Cartwright; Lead Actors Clive Owen, David Thewlis, Diana Quick
Light, likeable road movie in which two friends live out their dreams and set out in a self-built American car with their next-door neighbour.

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL
Facsimile 071 436 2327

Satanic abuse

From Michael Eaton and David Long

The issue of the behavioural effects of representations of violence on children is vexed and contentious and, without doubt, worthy of discussion in situations other than the academic discipline of social psychology. But we must question the value of allowing Bea Campbell and Judith Dawson's views (S&S September) to stand critically unchallenged in a specialist film magazine whose readership may well be unfamiliar with the wider context into which the position held by these writers fits.

What was advertised as a consideration of a recent, much-publicised statement by Professor Elizabeth Newson turned out to be little more than an *ad feminem* attack fuelled entirely by resentment at Newson's past caution and scepticism about interrogative techniques which elicit apparent evidence of the existence of widespread internationally organised networks of Satanists. When we examine in detail what these writers have to say about events in Nottingham in 1989, the nature of their position becomes clear. They describe this case as a "watershed" in the history of child protection in which "the culture of the abuse was designated as 'satanic.'" This represents, at the very least, a selective interpretation of a highly complex sociological phenomenon.

It was only after actual child abuse was proven that the notion of 'Satanic abuse' began to prevail. A Joint Enquiry Team, consisting of three police officers and three social work staff (of which one of the present writers was one), was appointed to investigate possible Satanic involvement. The team was concerned about the reliance of some of the professionals involved on American ultra-right-wing fundamentalist Christian literature and evangelical training methods. John and Elizabeth Newson were called in because of their proven academic expertise in the field of child development. They found, after examining transcripts of interviews with children, that the 'disclosures' of Satanic activity were the result of an interviewing technique which depended on the use of leading questions in which the predispositions of the interviewer were fulfilled. The JET report came to the conclusion that a social process had been unleashed which bore an uncanny resemblance to a medieval witch hunt.

Similar conclusions have also emerged from the Clyde reports into accusations of Satanic child abuse in Orkney and the recent Home Office report by Professor Jean La Fontaine into the 'Nature and Extent of Organised Child Abuse'. The tragedy of this phenomenon is that it has contributed to the diversion of resources away from the investigation and treatment of actual child abuse, whether organised or not. It seems particularly abusive in this context for Campbell and Dawson to attack Professor Newson for "directing attention away from how adults hurt [children]".

Nowhere in the article is it acknowledged that Judith Dawson was a senior manager with responsibility for child protection in

the Nottingham case. Might it be that this unstated involvement explains why so much of the article is concerned not with issues of screen violence, but with an attempt, in a journal of record, to cast as historical fact a particularly contentious interpretation of events in which Professor Newson played an important role?

The evident, but unspoken, purpose of Campbell and Dawson's article seems to be nothing less than an insistence that conspiratorially organised networks of Satan-worshipping child abusers are abroad in the land and that those parents whose pleas of innocence have been vindicated by the judgement in the Rochdale case and by the Clyde and La Fontaine reports are perpetrators. To print such a one-sided attack on a noted authority in the field of child psychology does this journal no credit.

Nottingham

Blown away

From Peter Hill

Re: Conclusion of Richard Dyer's article on *Speed* (S&S October):

Now I know why I watched *Blown Away*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Teen emotions

From Carolyn C. Richardson (age 15)

Having read the review of *Reality Bites* (S&S July) I am compelled to say that you are not a teenager and therefore have no insight into "teen emotions".

According to you, "idealism is suffering... Troy should have paired off with Mike; or else Mike, goaded once too often, should have killed Troy". Unfortunately, this is not idealism any more - it has been used too many times to be different. Perhaps you have decided that Agatha Christie for all would be a good idea, but I for one find this slightly boring.

Maybe you as an adult cannot understand the way society has changed, that self-centredness is one of today's attributes and that the first thing you know about a person is whether they are good looking or not. Troy is a lot better looking than Mike, therefore Lelaina would like him more than Mike.

The whole film is a way of stating that each generation has its own values and everyone has a different way of reacting to those values. Oh! and who says you have to like music of all the same genre? Nowadays it is totally normal to "wax nostalgic" about *The Doors* and to love *2 Unlimited*.

Maybe next time Mark Sinker writes a review containing the words "teen emotions" he will remember that he has forgotten all about such things and won't be so derisive of a society he knows nothing of. Maybe you could get a teenager to review a film that was made for them to understand and for the prejudiced to wonder at.

Meispelt, Luxembourg

Disney meets Japan

From Oliver Coombes

At the risk of writing "some sad 'anorak' monologue", I would like to comment on Caren Myers' review of *The Lion King* (S&S October).

First of all, I would be interested to know which parts of the film she considers to be computer generated. Aside from the wildebeest stampede, only two other scenes seem

to use computer graphics: the flamingos flying over the river during the opening sequence and the goose-stepping hyenas. The total time given over to these pieces of computer animation is less than five minutes, which makes her statement that "the film's emphasis is on flashy, computer-generated effects" untenable.

Your reviewer seems disappointed that *The Lion King* was based on an original story; I hope her opinion of the film will improve when she learns it is not. There are obvious similarities between Disney's film and *Jungle Taitei* (*The Jungle Emperor*), a Japanese animated series made in the 60s by Osamu Tezuka. This has, of course, been widely reported in Japan, but it would be nice for *Sight and Sound* to break the silence in Britain.

Kanagawa, Japan

Video quality

From Kevin Brownlow and David Gill

Your reviewers draw attention to the poor photographic quality in the Tartan Video release of *Sunrise* as "the only gripe" (Video, S&S November). What else does a silent film have going for it but its photographic quality? To present it in anything but first-class quality is an insult to the artists who made it, for first-class quality exists. (It was restored by Karl Malkames.) This is the film which won the first Academy Award for cinematography - Charles Rosher and Karl Struss were the cameramen - and to put it out in such a deplorable manner is an insult to us, the potential buyers, as well.

The video market has shown itself capable of treating early cinema in a depressingly shabby fashion. Your reviewers should be encouraged to use stronger language.

London NW1

Editor's note Tartan will reply next issue

Moscow notes

From Verina Glaessner

Due to a variety of circumstances a misleading impression was given in my 'Moscow notes' piece (S&S November).

A budget of \$300,000 is and has been quite usual for feature films made in Russia without state involvement. It is precisely not a sign of state re-involvement in film-making as the piece implies, although the state is indeed once more involved.

Roskino has not mutated into Goskino - yet. I wrote of a linguistic slippage, in conversation. Nor is the Head of the State Film Archive, Naum Kleiman's policy of welcoming international involvement new.

I also added a rider to my mention of the recent interest shown by sections of the Russian film establishment in the Tadjik cinema. I questioned whether there might not be a strategic interest involved?

Krasnogorsk is no longer secret, Khodjaev is usually thus transliterated and Ludmila Petrushevskaya as here.

London NW1

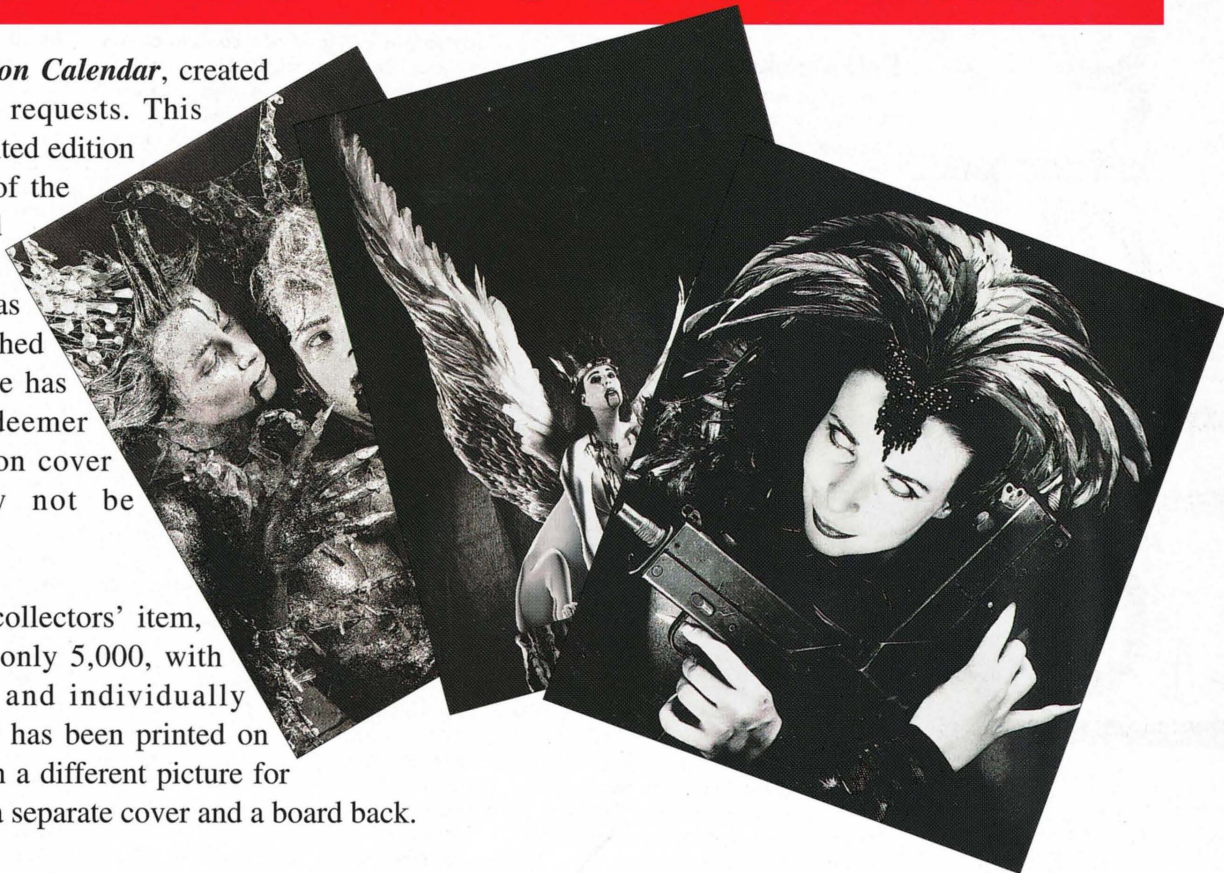
Additions and corrections

November 1994 p. 56: In the credits of *Peeping Tom*, Wally Scott is incorrectly credited as choreographer; the credit should read: Additional music: Wally Stott; p. 60: In the video review of *Tom & Viv*, it was incorrectly stated that the film won a BAFTA award. It was nominated only.

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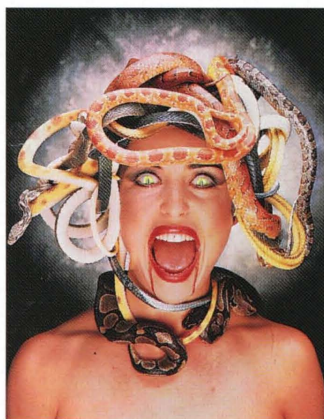
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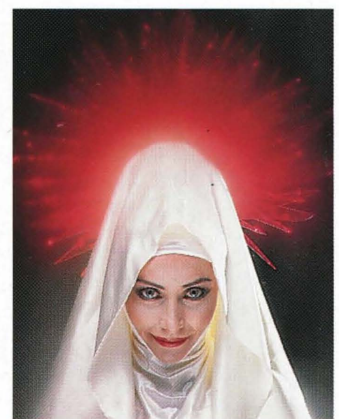
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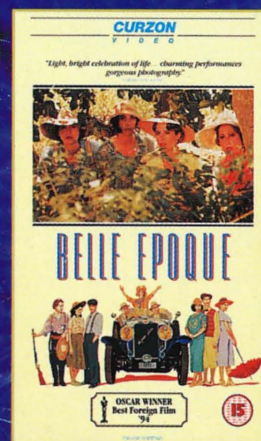
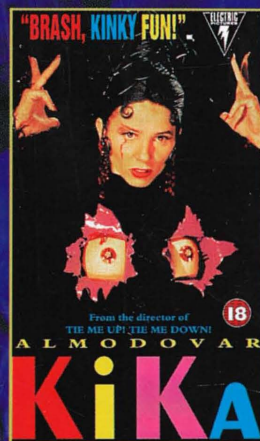
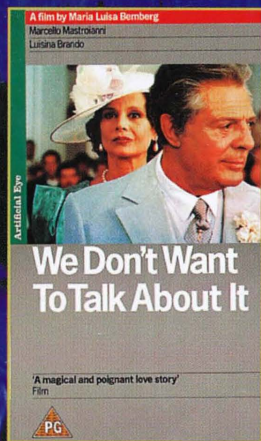
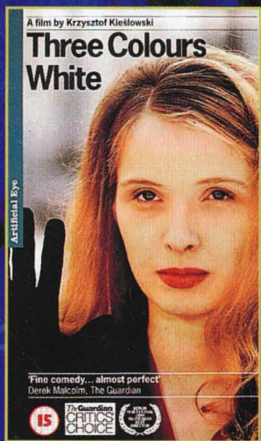
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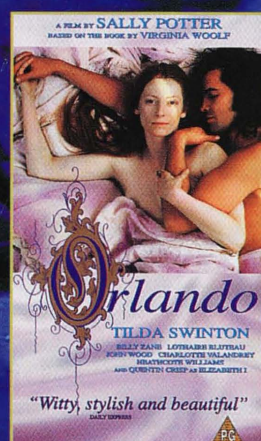
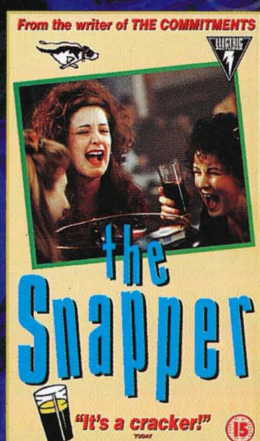
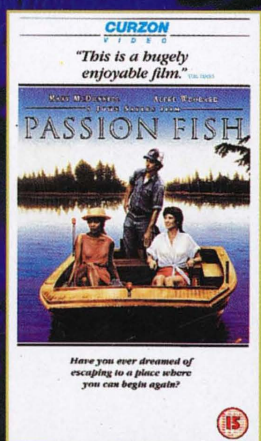
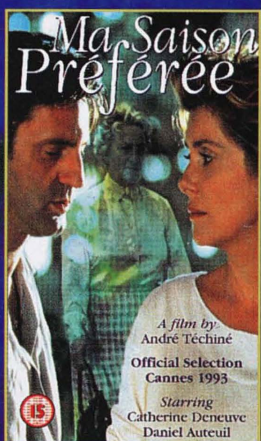
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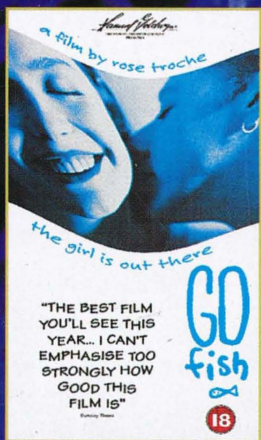
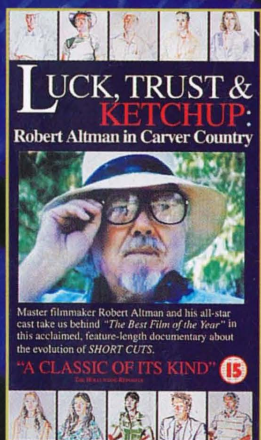
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